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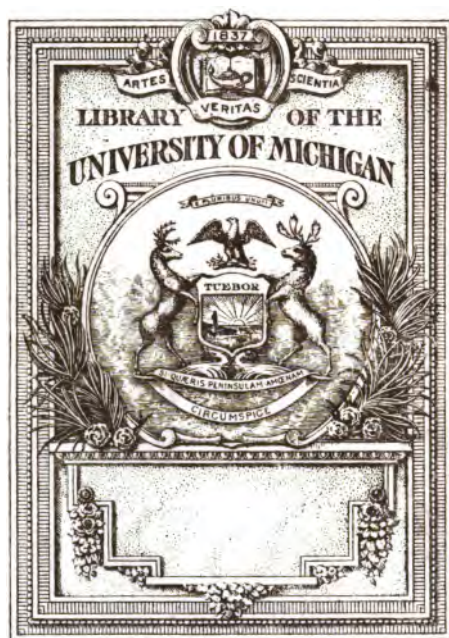
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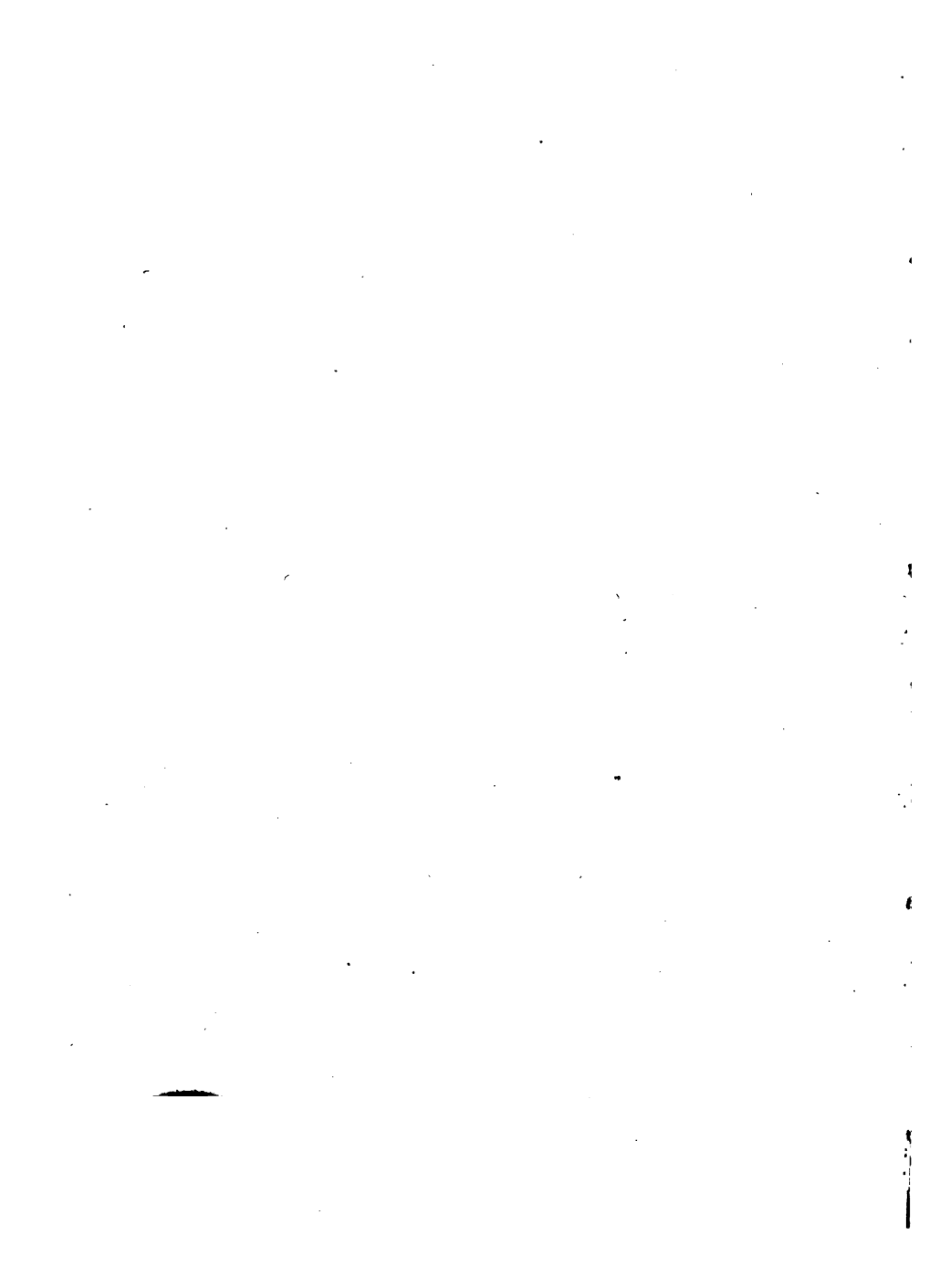
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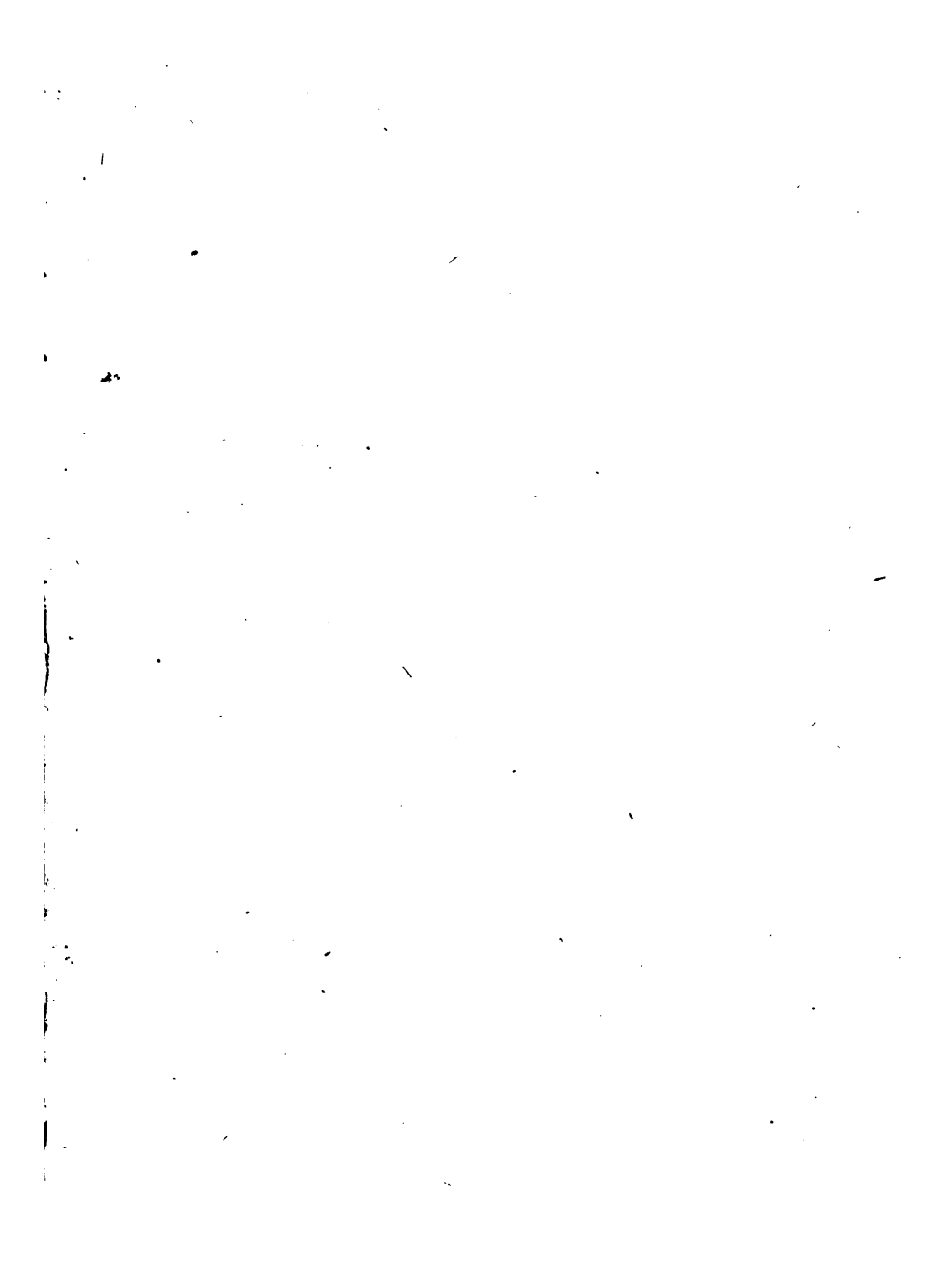
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A

# DEMORALIZING MARRIAGE.

BY

EDGAR FAWCETT,

AUTHOR OF "DOUGLAS DUANE," "AN AMBITIOUS WOMAN,"  
"A GENTLEMAN OF LEISURE," ETC.

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PHILADELPHIA:  
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY.  
1889.



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TO MY FRIEND,

EDGAR SALTUS,

IN RECOGNITION OF HIS DISTINCT GENIUS, IN AFFECTIONATE APPRECIATION  
OF HIS RAPID SUCCESS AS A NOVELIST, AND IN THE HOPE THAT  
MANY YEARS MAY PASS BEFORE ALL HIS BRILLIANT  
GIFTS OF STORY-TELLING SHALL CEASE TO  
CHARM THEIR LOYAL LISTENERS.

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# A DEMORALIZING MARRIAGE.

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## I.

"It ought to be a very brilliant ball," said Mrs. Casilear.

"I haven't a doubt that it will be," returned the reporter for the *Morning Luminary*.

Mrs. Casilear rose from her chair and moved several paces toward the centre of the really imperial drawing-room. She was a large-moulded woman, with luminous black eyes and a set of teeth that should have been quite flawless because she frequently showed them in a full, bland smile. But Mrs. Casilear's teeth were marvels of adroit dentistry, and, like everything else about her, gave evidence of careful, artistic cultivation. Still, it is possible that no woman could have been at once more smart of attire, more dignified of carriage, and more entirely unaristocratic of demeanor. It was not that she revealed any taint of vulgarity; she had the "broad" pronunciation and nasal-toned voice of the West; but we have learned to associate these with so much refinement and education in our American women that they no longer carry a deplorable sound to New York or Boston ears. The English that Mrs. Casilear used was without

fault. She adjusted her white, gem-decked and well-tended hands with grace; her attire was always the pith and kernel of fashion, unmarred by one least hint of loudness. Nothing about her would have furnished material for the censure of a *raffineur* in codes, modes and niceties, and yet you could not have found any such dainty arbiter, from New York to St. Petersburg, who would have been willing to admit that high-breeding was one of her evident endowments. A critic thus deftly equipped, however, might have conceded that she showed a conscious desire to be accredited with this distinction.

"I thought it best to see you in person, and to tell you all the facts," Mrs. Casilear now continued. She lifted one arm, indicating by a sweep of it the ornaments and grandeurs of the apartment. "You may mention the house," she continued, "if you care to do so."

"Oh, yes," said the reporter, who chanced, in this case, to be a woman. "I understand *that* perfectly." She dashed off several lines on the tablets on her lap, glancing for a moment to right and left. "While I waited for you to appear I took a great deal of notice."

She was a girl of perhaps not more than twenty, with a pale, clean-cut face that looked none the healthier because of her somewhat shabby raiment, and a quick-darting brown eye that habit had already trained in the keener aptitudes of scrutiny.

"Oh, very well," replied Mrs. Casilear. She proceeded to speak as if addressing some imaginary third party, her

gaze roaming from tapestry to statue, from Turkish rug to Japanese screen, from a painting by Cabanel to a bronze by Barye, finally resting upon her own portrait, preposterously flattered, for which a vast number of francs had not long ago been paid in Paris to Carolus Duran. "There are about a thousand invitations issued. The rooms will be decorated with the choicest flowers procurable; Klunder has that in charge,—*gloire de Paris* and Cornelia Cook roses, you know, and a profusion of lilies-of-the-valley."

"Thank you," said the reporter, with her slim and rather dingy fingers working away at her tablets. An instant later she looked up inquiringly. "There'll be a German, I suppose."

"Oh, of course."

"Who will lead it, please? Mr. Pinckney Clarke? Mr. Schuylkill Lexington?"

Mrs. Casilear lifted her neat black eyebrows haughtily, —a trifle too haughtily under the circumstances, which were those of her own voluntary submission to an "interview."

"Must I tell that?" she asked, with a little cold trill of laughter.

"Oh, not if you haven't decided yet," said the girl-scribe apologetically.

Mrs. Casilear coughed. "Well, I haven't." She promptly became more affable. "You take for granted that one of those two gentlemen ought to lead my *cotillon*?"

"Oh, no; not that. But they're mostly leading, this

winter, at the Patriarchs' and the Assemblies, and all such places. Mr. Pinckney Clarke is considered the best leader, I believe, though he don't come of the same Knickerbocker stock, you know, as Mr. Schuylkill Lexington does."

"Ah, indeed," was the measuredly sedate reply. "Well, I am *not* decided yet on that point. But you might put down Mr. Lexington. I suppose my sister will select him."

"Very well. Thank you." The fingers began to work again at the tablets. "Your sister is Miss Rosalind Maturin, I believe?"

"Miss Rosalind Maturin. Yes; I see you know her."

The reporter looked up again, with a smile. "Of course. Who doesn't? Your family is about as well known to *us* newspaper people as though 'twas the President's."

"Ah, I see," murmured Mrs. Casilear. She liked this; it was just the sort of incense that pleasurably tickled her nostrils.

"Some of the guests, now?" continued the girl. "Would you mind giving me a few of their names, please? I mean of those that have accepted."

"Accepted?" Mrs. Casilear briskly echoed, and with a tartness that told she did not like the word. "No one has accepted, my good young lady, and for an excellent reason. I sent my cards out simply in the form of an 'At Home.' That did away with the bothersome shower of notes afterward."

"An 'At Home'. Certainly. I understand."

The girl understood but too well. She had said to one

of her companions on the *Morning Luminary* only an hour or two since: "I must go up Fifth Avenue to-day and try to get some points about that shoddy ball old Moses Maturin's daughter is going to give."

"And the dresses, please?" she went on. "Would you mind letting me know *just* what you and your sister will wear? Our paper considers *that* the most important item that we can run into an article of this kind. That, and the names of the people invited."

"Ah, quite so," replied Mrs. Casilear. She had picked up this last phrase in England; it had a curious sound between her American lips. "I am sorry about my inability to tell you just who will come. But—a—everybody is invited, you know; all the people who are—er—'in the swim,' as they term it."

"I understand," said the girl again. She ran over a list of names with the most facile glibness: "Mr. and Mrs. Van Corlear and the Misses Van Corlear; Mr. Beekman Van Corlear; Mrs. Hamilton Van Dam and Miss Effie Van Dam; Mr. Lexington Madison, Mrs. Gramercy Madison, the Misses Madison; Mrs. Schenectady, Mr. Schuyler Schenectady, and Miss Maud Schenectady; Mrs. Amsterdam, the Misses Amsterdam, Mr. —"

"Oh, dear! That will do!" Mrs. Casilear smilingly but rather firmly broke in. "Yes, they are the set I mean; they have all been asked. As for our gowns on the evening of the ball, these are both creations of Worth, and particularly pretty ones." Here the lady reseated herself, as if her

subject had become too vitally exigent to allow of its being dissertated on while she remained standing. She then promptly entered into a most detailed explanation of just what garments her sister and herself expected to don for the festival. The reporter's pencil, all this time, leaped lightning-like over her tablets.

"I wish everybody was as easy to interview as you are," the girl said, regarding Mrs. Casilear with her wan, work-a-day smile, after she had jotted down the last precious bit of intelligence,—*"a cluster of nephotos rose-buds in the hair, and white mousquetaire gloves."*

"If you *would* be so kind, now, as to give me a little information about your *family*," she went on; "you've children, I believe?"

"Yes; two,—Reginald and Sylvia."

"You are a widow, are you not?"

"Yes. I was married in San Francisco after the death of my father, whose name, as you most probably know, was Moses Maturin. When my husband died I lived quietly for some time with my sister, my two children and my uncle, Mr. Haviland. Then we all went abroad, and on our return, this autumn, we conceived the plan of renting this house and trying how life in New York would please us. There; that is a very simple history, isn't it? I am afraid I can't spare you any more time at present, as I am somewhat engaged this afternoon." Here Mrs. Casilear drew forth a small watch that was a blaze of diamonds and sapphires. "Excuse me," she said, as she glanced at the face of her



shining little bauble, which, in its way, certainly seemed to suggest that time was very precious indeed.

The girl at once rose. She was accustomed to being treated a good deal less politely than this during other similar visits. "I'm very much obliged to you, indeed," she said, gathering her notes together in a roll and slipping an opportune ring of elastic round them just before thrusting them out of sight. "It's *such* a relief to have our matter made easy for us as you've made it to-day. We must get it, you know, and we're sometimes wretchedly bothered as to the means. We're obliged to adopt all sorts of means for getting it, as you may imagine."

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Casilear, who had also risen; "and I suppose you very often get it wrong in consequence—Ah, children," she suddenly added, as two airy little shapes in modish gear came suddenly darting into the room through one of the rich-hung door-ways.

"What beautiful children!" exclaimed the reporter.

"They've just come from their riding lesson," said Mrs. Casilear, as the boy and girl both danced up to her and each seized one of her hands, turning their innocent eyes a moment afterward at the stranger, with that severe stare of criticism and inquiry which children excel in bestowing.

"Did you enjoy yourself, Sylvia?"

"Yes," said the little girl, who was not over seven years old, and who had her mother's black eyes, beaming from a tiny face shaped like a heart and framed in a cloud of amber hair. "We had lots of fun, didn't we, Reggie?"

"I did; *you* didn't, Sylvia," returned her brother, still staring very hard at the reporter while he clasped his mother's hand. He could not have been more than a year older than his sister. He looked like a little prince, with his dark curly hair, his lustrous dark-blue eyes, and his foreign, picturesque raiment. "Sylvia has to be taken care of all the time; they're afraid she'll slip off."

"Sylvia is a little girl," said Mrs. Casilear. "You mustn't make fun of her, Reggie, because you're a great strong horseman yourself. That isn't gallant of you a bit."

"Oh, they're too lovely for anything, really," said the girl, as she moved toward the door.

Mrs. Casilear laughed. She always showed to better advantage when she was near her children, stroking their hair, watching their sprightly, graceful movements and occasionally addressing them with a sentence or two of playful maternal sarcasm. "You mustn't interview *them*," she exclaimed; "they're quite too young for any such performance as that."

"I'd like very much to do it," answered the girl, laughing also. She was meanwhile mentally concluding that the neatest little paragraph could be put in to-morrow's *Luminary* about the two fairy-like figures that had appeared within the sumptuous drawing-room of their millionaire mamma, so enchantingly dressed, and breathing such evidences of infantile luxury that one forgot, for the instant, what hordes of poor, wee, starving creatures the huge city contained elsewhere, on that bitter, snowy, cruel winter day.

"It would be dangerous," said Mrs. Casilear, following her several steps in her progress toward the door-way; "they might give away some of our most important family secrets; they're so distressingly frank, you know."

And then, as if by magic, the lady's hand bore a little crushed bank-note, which it had not given the faintest previous sign of possessing. "Good-day," she said, and the girl had either to take the money or refuse it. She took it; indeed, it was a God-send to her, and she comprehended perfectly just why it was given. Mrs. Casilear wanted to have everything perfectly correct in the *Luminary* next Wednesday morning.

"Oh, thank you,—thank you very much," she faltered; and then she crossed the threshold of the door nearest her and passed away forever from the presence of her extraordinarily courteous hostess.

These episodes of tangency between the lives of two beings placed most oppositely as regards worldly ease and thrift must ever teem with the pathos of piercing contrast. This girl, as it chanced, supported by her newspaper-work alone an invalid sister and two children of the latter, a boy and a girl, whose respective ages were nearly the same as those of Reggie and Sylvia. She adored them both, but would sometimes be so tired when she came home at night that she could do no more than just give them a kiss and a hug apiece before falling asleep. A single pen makes a frail kind of life-preserver when four pairs of hands cling to it, with the great ocean of threat and risk billowing and swing-

ing on every side. "Oh, it's a funny, topsy-turvy kind of a world!" the girl thought, as she descended the spacious front-stoop of the Fifth Avenue mansion; and this was an aphorism, by the way, whose wisdom and freshness would hardly have been allowed to pass muster with the *Morning Luminary*. There they wanted more original ideas, as a matter of course, than were to be found in the mere calling of the world by hard names, as if millions of weary and suffering lips had not done so countless times already!

Mrs. Casilear went up-stairs, after seeing the reporter, with her children clinging and prattling to her while she made them the kindest but most absent answers.

"Mamma, you're not attending to me a bit!" exclaimed Reggie in despair, as they all three entered one of the up-stairs rooms. This was in the special *suite* of Mrs. Casilear; her sister Rosalind's apartments were on the floor above. Here the walls were all a tender glory of rose-colored satin, and the furniture in the style of *Louis Quinze*, with china monstrosities on the inlaid cabinets and tables that Pompadour herself would have delighted in.

"No, mamma," declared Sylvia, "you're not attending to us a bit!" The little girl rarely permitted her brother to express a sentiment which she did not publicly endorse. Whatever Reggie said she delighted in saying over; whatever he did she delighted in doing over,—and sometimes with results either of peril or disaster.

Mrs. Casilear was always charming to her children, and charming to others who watched her when with them.

"My darlings," she said, waking up, as it were, "mamma has *not* been very polite, has she? But to tell the truth, her mind has been wandering."

"How can your mind wander, mamma," asked Reggie, "if you don't wander yourself?"

This psychological query was of so baffling a nature to Sylvia that she did not even repeat it. She contented herself with throwing a look of challenge at her mother that seemed to defy adequate treatment of so subtle a problem.

Mrs. Casilcar, however, did her explanatory best with Reggie, who presently cried, spurning in true childish way the abstract for the concrete, "When you think about the big party, mamma, like that, do you think about just how much ice-cream everybody's going to have?"

"Oh, no," said his mother, "Delmonico attends to those matters."

"Who is Delmonico? The man that makes the ice-cream?"

"Yes, my dear."

"Can't Marie take us to see him some day, instead of going with us to the park?" asked Sylvia. She had her moods of pure originality, quite unaffected by sisterly partisanship, and ice-cream was one of the subjects that usually roused all her mental independence.

"Is that lady we saw down in the drawing-room going to be at the big party?" asked Reggie.

"I don't believe she is," said Sylvia; "she hasn't got nice enough clothes; has she, mamma?"

"You mustn't think so much of clothes," said Mrs. Casilear to her daughter, beginning to unbutton the costly outer jacket that the latter had worn from riding-school. "You must judge people by what they are, my dear, and not by what they wear."

"That's just the way I talk to her, mamma," said Reggie, with an air of great sapience. "I told her only yesterday that fine feathers don't make fine birds; didn't I, Sylvia?"

"Yes," said Sylvia, as though she had accepted this intellectual pearl without having found it perfectly flawless. "But what kind of feathers *do* make fine birds? Ugly feathers? We saw a peacock up at Central Park, the other day. Wasn't *he* a fine bird? He had fine feathers."

"He might have been very poor eating, though," said a clear voice at the farther end of the chamber. Both children ran toward the new-comer. Next to their mamma they loved their Aunt Rosalind better than any one else in the world.

"Well," said Mrs. Casilear to her sister, not long afterward, when the children had been sent away to the nursery with the usual fond kiss from both mother and aunt, "I got through my interview splendidly, Rosalind. You ought to have seen how self-possessed I was."

"Oh, I don't doubt that, Caroline."

"None of your sarcasm, please."

"I think the whole thing about as wrong as *can* be, you know," said Rosalind Maturin, lifting her shoulders for a moment and putting her head transiently on one side.

"Oh, well," replied Mrs. Casilear, "you think the ball itself all wrong, for that matter."

Rosalind nodded with decision. "Well, yes, I do."

"I can't for the life of me see why," returned her sister.

"Why, Caroline! If four or five hundred people come to this house next Tuesday evening, we will not know fifty of them *even by sight*. Think of that."

"I have thought of it. My dear, why didn't you set your foot down like this in the first place?"

"I'm not setting my foot down now. But I saw weeks ago that your heart was bent on having a ball, and you must remember how I told you then that the idea was a foolish one."

Mrs. Casilear was looking at her sister keenly. "You've heard something, Rosalind," she said; "something disagreeable. What is it?"

Rosalind laughed. She had one of those faces to which laughter is brilliantly becoming. She was not so tall as her sister, nor so large, but her appearance was in every way more high-bred than Mrs. Casilear's. All her attitudes were grace, all her gestures were harmony, and what is better than either, both were as unconscious as the motions of a flower in the wind. Her chestnut hair was curly; simply as she wore it, no discipline could tame its lovely mutinies; it grew so low over her forehead and temples that this was apt to be the first thing you noticed about her face, which also possessed the charm of dimples and a mouth of peculiarly sweet mobility and expressiveness. Her eyes were

gray, with the least tint of gold in their long lashes,—an effect at once so odd and so fascinating that those who admired it the most were often the very ones to forget how much soft liquid fire lived in the eyes themselves.

“It is nothing a bit more disagreeable,” Rosalind said, “than you should be prepared, my dear Caroline, to expect.”

“Something Mrs. Trelawney has told you, I suppose.”

“Why should you suspect poor Naomi Trelawney? Because she’s about the only woman in New York whom I know at all well?”

“You don’t seem to care whether you know any others or not,” said Mrs. Casilear, who could never show a grain of sympathy for her sister’s passive willingness to remain obscure. “You seem to be perfectly infatuated with that woman and her husband and her family. For my part, I can’t see what you see in them all except a sort of bravado against recognized rules of society.”

“Don’t say that, Caroline, dear.”

These two sisters never quarrelled, and never meant to do so. They loved each other dearly, though they were as opposite as the poles in many separate ways. A few monitory words like those that had just left Rosalind were always sufficient to keep the current of their converse limpid and unerratic.

“Well, pardon me, then, if I’ve spoken unkindly about your friends,” Mrs. Casilear said. “I take it all back. But, my dear, you know they *are* agnostics.”



"Of course they are; and they're not at all ashamed of it, I assure you."

"More's the pity!" was the reply, spoken with a mild shudder.

Rosalind gave one of her dulcet laughs again. "You're so funny, Caroline," she said. "You look at agnosticism entirely from the stand-point of respectability."

"I think it horridly vulgar, if you mean that."

Rosalind shrugged her shoulders. "Is it vulgar to think?"

"That depends upon the *subject* of our thoughts," answered Mrs. Casilear, showing in momentary glimpse, as it were, a huge sweep of unreasonableness. "And so Mrs. Trelawney has heard disagreeable things, has she?"

"I don't mind telling you that it *was* she," Rosalind replied. "I more or less forced her to tell me what she *had* heard . . ."

"Yes; well?"

"Caroline, people are talking. They say that we are doing a very bold and purse-proud thing."

"Purse-proud!" cried Mrs. Casilear.

"Yes—that was one of the words," continued Rosalind. "They say that we are trying to take society here by storm, and it will not be so taken, whether we have six millions of dollars between us or only six thousand."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Casilear, rising and beginning to pace the floor. The glittering bugles on her black silk dress appeared to dart out new, angry scintillations.

"I'm not at all afraid that they won't come," she went on, with her head high in the air and her lips pressing themselves, every now and then, tightly together. "These people bow down before money whenever they find it in great quantities. We may be the daughters of Moses Maturin, and poor, dear, dead papa, for all his great abilities, may have been a little ragged boy, once, in the streets of this very metropolis; but the so-called aristocrats here are not going to miss any chance of paying their homage to wealth like ours,—depend upon that, Rosalind; it's as sure as fate."

But there was an excitement, a lurking anxiety, about the manner in which these words were delivered, that implied anything rather than the complete stability of Mrs. Casilear's expressed conviction. She came quite close to Rosalind and sat down at her side just as the latter had begun somewhat vehemently to say,—

"And if it is as sure as fate, Caroline, how can you possibly take interest in people whom you hold inferior enough to speak of so contemptuously?"

"Take interest? Why, they're the people one ought to know."

"*Because* they are what you paint them,—money-worshipping snobs?"

"Oh, not at all. I declare, Rosalind, you become more and more radical and queer every week. I do wish you wouldn't go with the Trelawneys to that Twentieth Century Club any longer. The next thing, you'll be taking the platform somewhere about something,—woman's rights, perhaps."

"There's no danger of that. I wish there were."

"You wish there were!"

"Yes. But I'm not clever enough. I suppose I'm one of those persons whom it's proper to call an involuntary background. They are needed, no doubt, quite as much as the voluntary foregrounds are."

"Thank heaven for your professed mediocrity, then," Mrs. Casilear exclaimed, "provided it saves you from publishing yourself to the world! For if there is one thing particularly dreadful in a woman, Rosalind, it's being identified with 'a movement' or 'a cause.' It's so *horribly* common, you know."

Rosalind looked at her sister with a dry little pursing of the lips, for a moment, and then burst into a ripple of silvery laughter. "Oh, Caroline," she said, "how exactly like you that is! I should know it for yours among five hundred other speeches."

"Thanks. You must mean that I'm original."

"Original! You're the first out-and-out snob who ever had a really kind heart! I often wonder how you *can* be such a snob and yet have it,—I do, indeed! You're a sweet mother; you're a dear, good sister; you give up many an hour each week to charities, and yet you crave the acquaintance of people who are hollow, heartless and artificial, merely because they are also fashionable. You've got the society craze, and for a woman like you to be so 'possessed' amounts to a positive affliction."

"I have it," said Mrs. Casilear, grimly humorous, "and

since you talk of it as if it were diphtheria or the measles, I only wish I could give it to you."

"Thanks; I've a preventive against contagion."

"Pray what is that?"

"Oh, my Twentieth Century Club, if you please. I like intelligence, progress, the exchange of ideas. I *don't* like pretension used as a flimsy cloak for frivolity. I *don't* like——"

"Pooh, Rosalind," broke in her sister, at this point; "you're only twenty-three years old. You *do* like dancing still. You have three millions of dollars in your own right, and everybody knows it. You can be a great belle if you want. You can marry superbly if you want. However, on that subject of marriage I had better say nothing. You might have been the Princess Corioli if you had chosen to lift a finger."

"Don't!" cried Rosalind, affecting to shiver. "I can still see the Prince's big waxy-looking nose, shaped like a vulture's beak, and the wiry, stubby gray moustache that bristled underneath it."

"Then there was Lord Arthur Illersley, last summer in the Engadine," continued her sister.

"Oh, Caroline! a creature with all his conversation smelling of the stable, and so ignorant that you imagined you saw his *h's* tremble, as if at any minute they might drop."

"Oh, well; you've had other chances, Rosalind. There was——"

"Never mind, please. I don't expect to marry, as I've

told you several times before. But if I do, it will be because I honor some man as greatly as I love him. And he must be a man, not a fortune-hunter, a gentlemanly vagabond, or a shallow-brained *gommeux*."

"Oh, I know about what sort of a person he must be," said Mrs. Casilear, with leaping ridicule; "you needn't describe him. He mustn't have a conservative hair on his head. He must be as familiar with all Herbert Spencer's half a thousand volumes as though they were Cobb's spelling-book, and he must talk of Darwin, sociology, and the conservation of forces as though they were the last railroad accident."

Rosalind laughed. "I wish I could meet somebody as entertaining as that," she said, "at our ball next Tuesday. Recollect to tell me, Caroline, if you should happen to light on any gentleman who gives the least evidence of caring to talk sense."

Mrs. Casilear rose again, and a touch of petulance was in her manner as she now turned and said:

"Do *you* recollect, please, not to desert me, that night."

"Desert you!"

"Turn indifferent, I mean, and leave me with a throng of people to receive almost alone. You've called me a snob, Rosalind," she continued, rather seriously than annoyedly, for these two sisters never dealt one another deep thrusts, and were on such terms of exquisite mutual understanding and feminine interdependence that a real dispute between them would have passed all limits of the probable; "you've

called me a snob, and it isn't by any means the first time, either; you're rather fond, all in all, of calling me one. . . . Well, I don't say you're a particle wrong. But I've my reasons for taking the course I have taken. I mean the children. Here we stand, you and I, with an ocean of money, and yet (we might as well look the matter fairly in the face) complete nobodies in the world. Yes, we are; you needn't toss your head so defiantly, for we *are*, and you know it. Do I want Reggie and Sylvia to grow up without the least social place or distinction? Do *you* want them to grow up like this? But how can they have it unless we struggle a little to secure it for them? There's no use of saying that New York aristocracy amounts to nothing, that it's a mass of self-created swells and impudent plutocrats, that it's this, that and the other. I begin to see that it makes quite as much fun of itself as anybody makes of *it*. And there it is, and one can either try to get into it or leave it alone, just as he or she shall choose. I choose to try and get into it for the children's sake,—and perhaps a little for my own and yours as well. We can despise it and laugh at it after we are once inside of its limits. Possibly I *am* doing a rather bold and pushing thing; I dare say there will be a good deal of contemptuous talk. But I'm not inclined to wait a small eternity; why should I be? We might go to Newport next summer and begin the siege gradually. So we should, if we were more ordinary kinds of persons than we are. Everybody, as it is, knows all about us."

"Thank heaven, nobody knows anything to our dis-

credit," said Rosalind. She had already begun to feel sick of next Tuesday's ball. She would have been considerably happier if her sister had never become the victim of any "society craze" whatever. She liked the world she lived in, and many of the people who populated it. She liked to meet new persons and to receive new, stimulating ideas. She liked, too, that her friends and associates should be ladies and gentlemen, though it was her great pleasure to spend many thousands of dollars each year from her truly enormous income upon those who were pinched and harassed by poverty. She had hardly been a fortnight in New York before her good offices toward the needy and the sick began in admirable earnest, and wherever she had lived at all permanently in previous times it had always been just that way. But she had no inclination for clasping diamonds about her throat and putting feathers into her hair and becoming one of an assemblage in which people gave themselves patrician airs either for the absurd reason that their ancestors were plain little Dutch shopkeepers who settled in New York when it used to be a plain little village, or for no reason whatever except that they had a great deal of money and a great deal of unwholesome pride, also, to make them mistake and misapply its uses.

"I haven't the least doubt," she had more than once said to her own thoughts, "that they will be secretly sneering at Caroline and myself, even while they are accepting our hospitality, because we are the late Moses Maturin's daughters."

## II.

Now it must not be supposed that either Mrs. Casilear or Rosalind was by any means ashamed of being Moses Maturin's daughter. They had both dearly loved their father, though during many childish years they had seen him quite rarely. Their mother had died while they were very young children, and they had been placed at a seminary in San Francisco, where they became known, in course of time, as the two young heiresses to colossal wealth. The lady who presided over the seminary was quite loth to receive the little girls when their father had first presented them for her future tutelage. Perhaps this unwillingness would speedily have ossified into an outright refusal, had not Moses Maturin shown her a purseful of tempting gold-pieces which he offered as payment in advance. He was a rather rough-looking young man in those days. He wore a beard as big as Kris-Kringle's, though it had in it the chestnut gloss of youth. His hands were tanned and horny as any workman's, and slight wonder, since he had handled the pickaxe in the mining countries for months at a time. He meant, moreover, to handle it again. But the years proved very civilizing to him, for they brought him wealth in amplest measure. He took trips East, and one of them even extended across the Atlantic as far as middle Russia.



His little girls were being very competently educated there at the San Francisco seminary, and he knew it. He had become qualified to judge. The lady-principal of the establishment would have a thrill of excitement, nowadays, when she learned that the millionaire, Moses Maturin, had called. She was inclined to slip on her best silk gown, also, and put a bit of tasteful ribbon at her throat. It was not at all the same with her as it had been a few years ago. Moses Maturin conferred an honor by visiting her establishment, and when she reflected that he had never married again, and that she still wanted three years of fifty, it is possible that an ambitious dream may have found its way into this fluttered school-mistress's heart. He always continued to be what fastidious people called "common." The requisitions of syntax remained in many ways labyrinthine for him, and he had finally abandoned trying to discover their lost clue. People at one time talked of his millions as of other men's thousands. The rough, quaint, shrewd sayings of "Mose Maturin" were often on the lips of both friends and foes. But he had not many of the latter. His chief foe was his own inveterate, speculative folly. There were years when he literally did not know what to do with his money. His luck suggested a kind of variation on the hackneyed Midas legend. It was not so much as if everything he touched turned into gold; it was rather as if he touched nothing which did not prove to have gold somewhere in or near it. But four or five of his mines were silver ones and in the Nevada country. These for months at a time he scarcely

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regarded; their product was inconsiderable compared with others whence the yellow metal flowed to him in almost fabulous bounty. But, as it proved, these silver mines were afterward his monetary salvation. Misfortunes came marching in a grim phalanx across the fair field of this man's life. Lawsuits, exhausted leads, calamities to more than a single body of miners, accusations of unscrupulous legislative bribery,—such were a few of the forms by which the Proteus of disaster chose to declare himself. Maturin bore up against it all stoutly enough for many months. At length, however, when arrived the treachery and dishonesty of men whom he had lifted almost from the gutter and placed in enviable opulence, he quailed and flinched. His losses had been tremendous, though he still hoped that a certain decision of the courts would refill his coffers with the millions that he asserted to have been foully stolen thence by the most villanous of bandits.

Once, just before the end, he called at the seminary. His eldest daughter, Caroline, would graduate that year; she was already a blooming and well-equipped young lady. Rosalind, a little younger, had a more serious air than her sister, and was much the superior of the two in point of scholarship, while her predominance as regarded personal beauty needed but a glance for its confirmation. Their father had changed so much during the past few weeks that on again meeting him in the prim parlor of their academy, both girls recoiled in dismay. Afterward Rosalind's arms were first about his neck, her cheek was the first to be

pressed against his. He had always seemed to his daughters a man of imperishable youth and vitality. It pierced them with an actual awe, apart from their grief, to discern what haggardness and hollowness a short interval had wrought in that familiar face. He was going away again; he had always been going somewhere when he came to visit them like this, and the return had always meant for them costly gifts which had made the eyes of their school-fellows jealously burn. This time his journey was to Washington; his claim would soon be placed before the tribunal of the Supreme Court. He nearly frightened the girls to death by telling them that a horde of infernal robbers were hounding him toward desperation. Caroline and Rosalind soon interchanged looks of acute alarm, believing him crazy (which it is highly probable that to a certain degree he was) when he stated his deep regret that they had not each learned a trade, as poverty, after all, might some day overtake them. "Poverty!" they repeated to each other, aghast, after he had gone. But it is only doing them justice to chronicle that they thought much more of their father at this time than of any personal privation into which his misfortunes might plunge them.

And then, not long afterward, came the paralyzing news of his death by suicide in Washington. His claim had been denied him, and the result was said to have dethroned his reason. For two days he wandered about the streets, perfectly harmless, and informing everybody whom he knew that he himself was bankrupt and his daughters were

beggars. "But recollect your Nevada mines," people would answer him; "they are worth five millions to you if they are worth a dollar." Then he would draw back a little, and shake his head strangely, repeating the words "five millions," with a smile of sorrowful contempt. He had been said to have thirty millions once, and it was probably true. His insanity had taken a form full of the most terrible pathos, and one that revealed in colors of surpassing irony the vanity alike of all human happiness and human possession. Still a man of great wealth, he believed himself to be a pauper. He died so believing, on the night of the second day after his legal disappointment, from a pistol-shot inflicted by his own hand in his chamber at a hotel.

For some time after his death all his affairs remained in a condition of the most discouraging complexity. But the two girls were by no means unlucky in the fact that their uncle, Seth Haviland, had been appointed executor of their father's will. "Uncle Seth," whom they had known since earliest childhood, was their dead mother's only brother. He had sat for years in his modest California farm-house, and with a smile of mingled amusement and satire had watched from afar the daring, meteoric career of his brother-in-law, Moses Maturin. When the horrid calamity came, Seth Haviland set his lips grimly together, took the next train for San Francisco, and was with the two poor sobbing orphans in the piteous extremity of their grief. Afterward his piercing intellect dealt with those knotty financial entanglements left by Maturin, and in the end mastered their

intricacies. He was a lank, tall, sandy-haired man, with a receding forehead and a yellowish tuft of hair at his chin, the remainder of his lean, hard visage being quite smooth. You would never have any more dreamed that he possessed remarkable abilities than that the grocery-man at your street corner possessed them, or the washerwoman who starched your linen. He had never married, and after you knew him a little while you began to perceive that there was an absolutely satyr-like cynicism in his nature and temperament which would have flung, sooner or later, its frosty filaments over the entire matrimonial relation. But Caroline and Rosalind had never found him in the least way austere or repellent. He had accepted their caresses when they were children, and had managed somehow to give them the impression that if he did not hold all caresses to be, on principal, arrant nonsense, theirs were the first that he would have returned. He was a cynic to the marrow, but he was a cynic with a sense of duty and a conscience. The entire scheme of humanity was an immense grim joke to him, but he always recognized that his own share in the joke was a most practically operative one. Moses Maturin's daughters were neither of them capable of the least disloyalty to him after he had done them the great service which perhaps no other brain and energy could have more efficiently accomplished than did his own. He literally laid before them six millions of dollars, at the end of about two years after their father's death, as a treasure torn from harpy-like fingers that would but too gladly have clutched and carried away the

magnificent sum. "There, girls," he said, one day, in his unmusical voice, standing before them with all his rural plainness and angularity of demeanor; "you'll find in this memorandum book an account of the whole estate,—every dime that's been saved of it, and just how every dime's been invested. So," he added, caressing in his melancholy, meditative way the yellow tuft at his chin, "if money be the rut of all evil, why then you two can go right to work with your plantin' and have some first-class deviltry sproutin' out in less than no time."

"Oh, Uncle Seth!" cried Caroline; "how *can* you! Lots of good can be done with money, and we're going to try and do a great deal; are we not, Rosalind?"

"How'll you begin?" asked Uncle Seth, with dreamy solemnity. "By gettin' married?"

He gave one of his dry, brief, smileless chuckles a few weeks afterward, as it occurred to him how swiftly this prophetic question was being answered. He and his nieces were now occupying a delightful house together in an important street. Some of their former school friends visited them, and one of these, a Miss Fanny Casilear, brought her brother to have a glimpse of the young heiresses. Fanny was very probably the most deliberating young match-maker, anxious for the welfare of the family exchequer. Her brother, Norvin Casilear, pleased Caroline more than he deserved to do, since he was really a young man of few notable qualities, and not even equal, one would have said, to a *coup d'essai* as regarded the conquest of some large matri-

monial prize. But suddenly the town awoke one day to the fact that a colorless and only moderately well-off young wooer had succeeded in getting the promise of Caroline Maturin's hand. "What are you going to do about it?" inquired an indignant San Francisco grandee of Uncle Seth. The grandee had a son two or three years older than Caroline, who had barely missed being an imbecile.

Uncle Seth shrugged his bony shoulders. "I guess I'll let it stay as it is," he said, with oracular promptitude.

"But don't you believe this fellow has mercenary motives?" persisted the enraged grandee.

"Yes, I guess he has. It's pretty hard to get rid of them, where a girl's as rich as Caroline is. I don't know, myself, that I disbelieve in them. They're apt to keep a man steadier than love does, I reckon,—that is, when the wife don't sign away anything."

Caroline wedded Casilear, and did not sign away anything. As for her husband, he turned out steady enough to thrill with disgust the father of the shallow-brained but marriageable youth. He settled down amiably into the comfortable home supplied him, and became, with a gentle air as of augmenting domesticity, the father of two attractive children. And then occurred one of those mockeries in human experience which readily convince a certain class of philosophers how devoid of all heedful over-brooding custody are the nights and days known by sublunar mortals. Norvin Casilear, with every pleasurable inducement to live until seventy, from an affectionate and agreeable wife to a locally

unrivalled wine-cellar, was one week seized by a poignant illness and lying in his grave the next. He had not been without those lovable traits which people of neutral-tinted natures will often reveal to those nearest them, and there is little doubt that this youthful widow mourned him with very sincere grief. But hers was the inevitable briefer storm, with the rainbow at its end. She loved life, and had good reason to love it, with her health, her two beautiful children, her abundance of money. But she wanted a life of ampler span; the West, with its meagre population, its immature developments, wearied her. Rosalind was happy enough with her books and a few dear friends, but still she responded, and by no means reluctantly, to the spiritual restlessness of her sister. As a wife Caroline had often talked of going abroad, and now as a widow she urged the plan upon Rosalind and Uncle Seth. The latter said that it didn't make any particular difference to him, he guessed, as he couldn't speak a word of French, got deadly sea-sick if the sea wasn't like glass, and hated travelling worse than anything else in the world except neuralgia. This they at once took for consent on the part of Uncle Seth; they had long ago got used to his lazy, upside-down way of putting things. To go without him—almost to do anything without him—would have appeared to both of them wildly impracticable.

They passed three years abroad. It was in Paris that Caroline Casilear first began to perceive what nobodies, from a social outlook, were the daughters of Moses Maturin.



In San Francisco she had never given any thought whatever to the question of who was above her. No one had appeared to be above her, and she and her family were silently conceded to be above a great many people. But in Paris, among the American colony, so called, it was entirely different. Here were a number of New York, Boston and Philadelphia ladies who could not be induced to notice either Mrs. Casilear or her sister. They endeavored to cut her as civilly as they could, but, after all, the cut indirect and the cut direct differ as to little else except name. They spent one "season" in London, and here Mrs. Casilear became an exceedingly close student of her own countrywomen. She had by this time been piqued into a feeling of rivalry and resentment; she determined to seek the support of certain prominent English people who had treated her with much civility and who insisted upon not understanding how a very rich and well-mannered American lady like herself could be outranked or superseded by any second American lady whatever, from one democratic shore to the other of our free and independent land.

If Mrs. Casilear and her engaging young sister had over a million pounds between them, what handsomer brevet of American nobility could be discovered? So Mrs. Casilear went to work and entertained very sumptuously, at her house in Grosvenor Square, a few complaisant peers and peeresses. The effect was in a way magical. It takes an extremely strong-minded American to withstand the opportunity of meeting a member of the British aristocracy. *L'eau va à la rivière.*

Mrs. Casilear's second party was more marked by an American element than had been the first. Meanwhile, Rosalind would watch the manœuvres of her sister with a serene, though amused indifference, and Uncle Seth, whom no detail of the whole manifestation escaped, would not give any sign whatever, except that perhaps his mouth wore an unwontedly puckered look about the edges, and a sleepy twinkle, yet one of uncharacteristic keenness, now and then lit his narrow-lidded gray eyes.

Thus had Mrs. Casilear broken the ice in London, afterward coming back to New York with the expectation that she would now be *lancée* in the latter metropolis. Not so, however, did it by any means turn out. The welcome that she had expected to receive hung fire. Society stretched forth to her no greeting hand. Almost the sole fashionable friend of her own sex whom she at present had was Mrs. Golightly Busteed, and it had begun to appear as if this lady were not as fashionable as she had at first represented herself.

"She was nearly sure that she could obtain for me a card to the Patriarchs' last ball," Mrs. Casilear had once said of her to Rosalind, "but when the time came she pulled in her horns and made excuses."

Rosalind laughed. "And meanwhile she had had a number of drives in your carriage, and had lunched and dined with you quite often. She has no carriage of her own, this Mrs. Golightly Busteed. I shouldn't be greatly surprised if she hadn't very much of her own, either, in the way of

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luncheons and dinners. The woman is using you, Caroline. I took her measure the first time I ever met her. She goes to the Twentieth Century Club, and to those delightful literary entertainments which you so despise, at Mrs. Katharine Digby McCullough's. She goes everywhere, in fact,—everywhere she can get. Some day, perhaps, it will be she who will ask *you* for a ticket to one of the Patriarchs' balls."

"Ah—yes—perhaps," murmured Mrs. Casilear, a smile lighting her face on the instant. Her sister's few words had summoned a little triumphant picture before her eyes; if ever the so-called "society craze" had gripped anybody firmly, that person was Caroline Casilear. Then, seeing the faint, amused smile with which Rosalind was regarding her, she made an effort to divert this over-subtle penetration by saying,—

"Oh, the very *nicest* people go to the Twentieth Century Club, as far as *that* is concerned. The attendance there may be mixed, but it is full of persons with—er—position. As for Mrs. Busteed using me, my dear, I truly can't believe you are right, and you must admit that she's a very intelligent woman."

"I do," said Rosalind promptly. "She's so intelligent that she sometimes thinks it advisable to hide her light under a bushel."

"What *do* you mean, Rosalind?"

"Oh, it is so funny!" And here the heartiest of laughs broke from Rosalind. "Mrs. Trelawney first found it out about this Mrs. Golightly Busteed."

"Found *what* out, pray?"

"That she is ashamed of being an agnostic before certain people with whom she thinks professions of that sort would work disadvantageously to herself. Among free-thinkers her rationalism is as robust as possible; she professes to look upon the entire question of a deity ruling the universe as one regarding which neither clergyman nor layman has received the slightest definite tidings. But when Mrs. Amsterdam or Mrs. Poughkeepsie chances to be within earshot, it is altogether different. Then the speculations of Mrs. Busteed abruptly cease. Her name might be stricken from the Amsterdam or Poughkeepsie visiting-book if she showed any such open symptoms of infidelity. So she either conceals her views or else denies them. I have heard of her denying them more than once. I wish she would only do it when I was present; I should so enjoy exposing her."

"My dear girl," said her sister, "that is cruel of you."

"Well, justice often seems cruel," answered Rosalind.

Mrs. Casilear shrugged her shoulders. "Your friends, the Trelawneys, are agnostics."

"Of course; and they are not ashamed of being so. Mrs. Busteed is."

"Well, for my part," exclaimed Mrs. Casilear, as if she thought any discussion of the subject highly tedious, "I don't see how people can concern themselves with questions that are so—so——"

"Unaristocratic," supplied Rosalind. "Oh, Caroline, if you only knew how amusing you sometimes are!"

"I'm not clever, Rosalind, like you, and upon my word I don't want to be."

Just then Uncle Seth entered the room. He caught the last sentence very plainly.

"That's right, Caroline," he said. "I used to have a hen, out there on my farm, that laid her eggs just wherever she'd see fit. One day 'twas the barn, next 'twould be the stable, and maybe next 'twas under a blackberry bush. That hen had an elegant time. She wasn't troubled with intellect. Her eggs didn't weigh on her. Don't you let yours; leave that to Rosalind."

"Oh, if it's a matter of eggs," laughed Rosalind, "I'm afraid she means to put them all in one basket."

Mrs. Casilear gave her sister a sharp look. She knew that the latter was alluding to her ball and its possible disastrous consequences.

"Don't be too sure of that," she said. "But if I do, nobody is going to crush them."

On the morning which followed Mrs. Casilear's interview with the girl reporter, Mrs. Golightly Busteed dropped in to luncheon. She had once been a pretty woman, and she had her moments of more than passable comeliness yet; but time had caused an almost fatal misunderstanding, nowadays, between her sallow, fatigued face and the uncompassionate candors of sunshine. Her figure was still good, however, and her hair supposably plenteous, while the whitest and most even of teeth still decorated a smile which had in the past, accomplished its victories both of diplomacy

and fascination. To Rosalind she was a woman who teemed with insincerities, and none of them formidable enough to escape pettiness. She entered the dining-room, this morning, a little behind her two hostesses; it had apparently been her pleasure to pause and admire this bronze, that bit of tapestry or yonder bird-embroidered fire-screen.

"Oh, things are just *too* lovely in this house," she said. "I tell *everybody* what a palace it is."

"That is very kind of you," returned Mrs. Casilear, as the three ladies were seating themselves. Rosalind somehow did not think it was kind, though she remained silent as to her impressions on this point.

"We've tried to make the house comfortable," went on Mrs. Casilear, who had learned that this was always the proper adjective to use regarding your household possessions, no matter how great the degree of their splendor. "My sister, you know, left nearly everything to me in the way of arrangement. Didn't you, Rosalind, dear? She has her studies, Mrs. Busteed,—her music, her German, her deep reading, and all that,—while I, who am a very ordinary person, have no such absorbing cares."

"Ah, you forget those *perfect* children!" remonstrated Mrs. Busteed.

"Oh, the children? They have their nurses, and then they're so seldom troublesome that all the time we are together I look upon them as my two little second selves."

"What a sweet way of putting it!" exclaimed Mrs. Busteed, as though she had heard an epigram worthy of Mon-

taigne. And then to Rosalind she continued: "My dear Miss Maturin, it must be so charming to immerse one's self in learning and scholarship, as you do!"

"I'm a rather ignorant young woman, take me all in all," said Rosalind, a little grimly and crisply. "I've no idea what my sister means. Caroline, you must be out of your senses to talk about my 'deep reading.' I hope you'll not do anything of that sort next Tuesday evening at your ball."

"My dear," softly cried Mrs. Casilear, in gay homage, "I shall let everybody see, hear and admire for himself!"

"*Himself?*" queried Mrs. Busteed, with a sly glance of jocose appeal at Rosalind.

"Don't talk to her that way," Mrs. Casilear laughingly admonished, "or she might take the freak of staying upstairs the whole evening."

"Oh, that would be too dreadful!" exclaimed Mrs. Busteed, with great seeming seriousness; "would it not?" She was a good deal puzzled by Rosalind; she had now and then met other people whose treatment was just like hers; the girl either did not understand her, or understood her too well, it was hard to say precisely which. Mrs. Busteed by no means welcomed the idea of never being able to propitiate Rosalind; she liked the rôle of *ami de la maison* at the Casilear-Maturin home quite too well for that.

"Do you hear much about the ball?" Mrs. Casilear asked of her friend.

"Oh, *yes*. *Everybody* is talking of it." Then she looked very wise and smiling. "I hear that *the* Mrs. Schenectady,—

the leader of the clan, you know, Mrs. *Courtlandt* Schenectady,—is going to wear all her magnificent family diamonds.”

“Why, that is odd,” said Rosalind, with her eyes on her plate. “*I* had heard that none of the Schenectadys were coming.”

Mrs. Casilear bit her lip, and looked with a glance of swift, nervous inquiry at Mrs. Busteed. “That’s true,” she murmured; “my sister *did* hear it. The Trelawneys told her.”

“Oh, the Trelawneys!” Mrs. Busteed broke forth; and then she paused, remembering Rosalind’s friendship with them. “The Trelawneys,” she added, with a much blander tone, “*hardly* go in that fashionable Schenectady set, and it *doesn’t* seem probable that they could be very well informed.”

“I didn’t say that they *were* very well informed,” Rosalind returned. “I said that they had heard it. It may have been an unfounded report. Still, they heard it.”

“I shall make a *point* of asking the Schenectadys, if I see any of them at the Lexingtons’ ball to-morrow evening,” announced Mrs. Busteed.

“Oh, are you going, then, to the Lexingtons’ ball?” asked Mrs. Casilear, with an intonation that set Rosalind’s nerves on edge; it had so sharp a hint in it of undignified envy, and there had never been anything about her sister that Rosalind had heartily disliked as she did what seemed to her this ridiculous and humiliating “society craze.”

“Going to the Lexingtons’ ball?” echoed Mrs. Busteed. “Why, *of course*! I wouldn’t miss it for the world. They



say those immense rooms of theirs are to be a perfect ocean of flowers."

"Do they?" replied Mrs. Casilear. "How delightful! We are going to have a great many flowers,—but I thought you had not determined whether or not you were to go to the Lexingtons'."

"Did I ever appear to be at all uncertain about going?" asked Mrs. Busteed, with her brows raised innocently.

"Yes; and I advised you to go," said Mrs. Casilear, who would have given one of her biggest diamonds to go herself.

"Well," said Mrs. Busteed, with a full smile, "you see I've taken your advice."

The truth was, this lady had but just received her invitation. She had adroitly striven to secure it, and at the last moment had succeeded, just when even she, no less hopeful than pertinacious, had begun to despair.

### III.

"I SHALL want to stop at the Trelawneys', you know," said Rosalind to her sister, while they were out shopping together, with the two children on the seat opposite them.

"Yes; very well. There's nothing more that I want to do; is there?" And Mrs. Casilear mused.

Rosalind leaned forward and re-arranged the tumbled bow under Sylvia's chin.

"Really, Caroline," she smiled, "how should I know? You've already been at Arnold & Constable's, Moschowitz's, and Redfern's. I don't remember hearing you say that you were going anywhere else."

"Oh, Hurlbut's pharmacy!" cried Mrs. Casilear, in fervent self-rebuke. "I'm sure I put that medicine-chest in the carriage. Ah, there it is!" (as Reggie picked up something from under his feet and handed it to her). That's a little gentleman! . . . I can't for the life of me understand how those medicines go as they do."

"You take them yourself," said Rosalind, uncompromisingly. "There's hardly a day that I don't see you dosing yourself. To-day it's Bryonia for a headache, to-morrow it's Phosphorus for a flannelly feeling in your throat that you think will turn into a cold and that doesn't, and next day it's Nux for a touch of indigestion."

"I hate Nux," proclaimed Reggie; "it's so bitter."

"So do I hate Nux," chimed in Sylvia; "don't I Reggie?"

"Upon my word, Rosalind," said her sister freezingly, "there's no telling how brilliant you *can* be when you once let yourself loose."

"It's true," persisted Rosalind. "Nearly all American women *do* dose themselves, and you're no exception. Look at me. I never take a thing and never need to; it's simply because I'm devoted to fresh air and exercise. I don't care a bit for this carriage. If I lived alone I believe I wouldn't keep any other means of conveyance than a saddle-horse and a pair of skates."

"Aunt Rosalind likes to catch hold of my hand, when we're out together, and go so fast that she nearly walks my legs off," declared Reggie.

"Aunt Rosalind never wants to nearly walk *my* legs off," said Sylvia mournfully, and with an evident feeling of injury.

"You're too small," objected Reggie, with the doubtful consolation always belonging to remarks that are tinged by patronage; "you couldn't stand it. Besides, you're a girl."

"Good gracious, Reggie," said his aunt, laughing, "you forget that *I'm* a girl, too!"

Reggie echoed her laugh, and Sylvia immediately did the same, though not by any means sure what the joke was. "Oh, Aunt Rosalind," cried Reggie, "you're such a great, big, *old* girl!" And then there was more laughter from both the children, and Sylvia, who saw the joke most com-

prehendingly this time, flung a look of fond pride at her brother, that seemed to accredit him with powers of wit and amusement almost beyond the ordinary human limits.

"Thank you, Reggie," said Rosalind demurely; "I often *feel* like a great, big, old girl."

"I believe you more than half mean it," said Mrs. Casilear, frowning upon her sister in impatient rebuke. "*You*, Rosalind! If ever a girl had every reason on earth for being and behaving young, that one is yourself."

"Well, I often feel old, all the same," returned Rosalind, staring out of the carriage-window rather absently. "Perhaps it's because I can't get the least diversion from things that delight other girls of my age. They want sensations, I want ideas, and there is just the difference between us. I shall be voted a bore at the ball, as sure as we're both alive; but then it isn't precisely going to break my heart if I am."

"You a bore?" muttered Mrs. Casilear, "absurd! *N'en parlons plus*. . . . Here we are at the pharmacy now. . . . No, Sylvia, you must let Reggie get out with mamma this time; you got out with Aunt Rosalind at Brentano's."

"Oh, never mind, mamma, if Sylvia would like to get out with you," said Reggie, his demeanor being at once the soul alike of gallantry and resignation.

"Reggie," exclaimed Sylvia, in her pretty, bird-like voice, "I don't care a bit about it, if *you'd* like to go. Really and truly I don't!"

"Did you ever see such a little lady and such a little

gentleman?" said Mrs. Casilear to Rosalind, in an "aside" that possessed very suspicious volume.

"No, I did *not*," replied Rosalind. "Just think what a proud mamma you are going to be when they grow up."

"I am thankful whenever I think of it," said Mrs. Casilear; and the children exchanged happy glances, and firmly believed that they had overheard a piece of private and extremely favorable criticism on themselves, owing to the carelessly modulated tones with which enthusiasm for their good conduct had caused mamma and Aunt Rosalind to speak.

As a reward they were both permitted to alight from the carriage with Mrs. Casilear. . . . "You want to stop at the Trelawneys', don't you?" said the latter to Rosalind on returning from the pharmacy. She gave the requisite address to the footman, and soon the carriage was again in motion.

"Why don't you come in and see Mrs. Trelawney *with* me?" Rosalind presently asked of her sister. "The woman has really become an intimate friend of mine, Caroline, and yet you scarcely know her."

"You understand perfectly well——" began Mrs. Casilear; and then she paused, as people will do when their own unuttered words have roused misgivings as to the prudence that has dictated them.

"What do I understand so well?" quickly asked Rosalind, with a slight ring of belligerence in her voice. "That Naomi Trelawney and her husband are people of a type far

above the ordinary fashionable noodles whom you care to cultivate?"

"Noodles!" repeated Reggie. "What a funny word!"

"Noodles! noodles!" cried Sylvia, clapping her hands with great glee. "What is a noodle?"

"It's a silly little word," answered her mother, "that Aunt Rosalind ought not to have used."

Rosalind put one hand about her sister's wrist and leaned closer to her. "Come and see what a lovely family they are," she said. "They've an Arthur and a Hilary, nearly of an age with our boy and girl."

"Oh, I don't mind going," said Mrs. Casilear, laughing a little. "But it has seemed to me that during the past few weeks, Rosalind, whenever you have delivered yourself of any particularly queer and unheard-of idea, you've quoted these Trelawneys as your authority for it."

"To-day is Saturday," said Rosalind, as if to herself. "*He* will be home."

"He?" questioned Mrs. Casilear. "You mean Mrs. Trelawney's husband?"

"Yes."

"You said he was a professor in some college, didn't you?"

"He has the chair of *belles-lettres* there," returned Rosalind, afterward stating which college it was.

"Isn't that rather odd?" asked Mrs. Casilear.

"Odd? How?"

"Why, that a free-thinker should hold such a position."

Rosalind gave a slight, impatient toss of her head. "A college chair isn't a pulpit," she answered.

They found Mr. Trelawney at home with his wife and children. Their house was in one of the up-town side streets, and outwardly it looked a very small abode indeed. But the moment you had passed its threshold you forgot the limited space it occupied, so much taste, comfort, and simple beauty met you at every turn. Mrs. Trelawney had managed all its appointments with the eye of a true artist. Caroline Casilear swept her gaze over the glowing yet choice effects of color, and noticed, as rapidly as a clever woman often can notice, the refined and yet home-like air that pervaded things. Money could not buy what one met here; she admitted it silently to herself. And just as she was about doing so, Mrs. Trelawney appeared.

She had stooped and put her arms about the children's necks, even before giving her hand to Mrs. Casilear and Rosalind. As she bowed her head, while kissing Reggie and Sylvia, you saw what an exquisite chestnut-and-gold her hair was; it had long lines of the darker shade interblended with the more luminous one. But its flossy masses looked almost too abundant for the delicate head and the slender throat beneath it. She had large, shining blue eyes and a smile that was like a sweet compensation for her almost unnatural pallor. At the birth of her youngest child, Hilary, she had been terribly ill, and ever since then, as she had once told Rosalind, it had seemed as if death had kissed her on both cheeks before being pitiful enough to release

her. She was very carefully watched by a devoted husband, who incessantly saw and dreaded the fitful, indeterminate character of her vitality. So restless and alert was her mind, so eager for new acquisitions of knowledge, so absorbed in watching the mighty intellectual progress of our century, that there was continual danger lest the frail body were being too severely taxed by the vigorous and electric brain.

"I am very glad to have this little chance of knowing you better," she presently said to Mrs. Casilear. "There was never such a poor payer of visits as myself, and consequently this dear Rosalind consents to do nearly all the visiting that is done between us, as you're aware. It is so very sweet of her not to feel how my debt goes on increasing all the time." And she turned toward Rosalind, taking one of the latter's hands fondlingly between both her own.

"Oh, I bear the debt in mind," said Rosalind. "Some day I shall perhaps claim payment."

"My sister means when your health is improved, I suppose," said Mrs. Casilear.

Rosalind had meant that, but for reasons very plain to her she had not wanted her meaning any more apparent than she had already made it.

"Oh, my health is quite good," said Mrs. Trelawney, starting a little and dropping Rosalind's hand at the same moment. "You did not imagine, did you, Mrs. Casilear," she continued, "that I was at all ill? No, indeed! It's not that,—not that in the least."



But it was that, as Rosalind had told her sister some time ago. Mrs. Trelawney treated her own bodily failing as if it were a guilty secret. She hated to concern even her own thoughts with it, still less to have it engage those of others. Now and then she would be afflicted by a sudden attack of prostration, or perhaps a fainting fit. Now and then she would be unable to rise from her bed at all until very late in the afternoon. But no matter how severe a form her illness took, it was always "nothing" or "the merest trifle." Only her husband knew the truth,—how this intensely vivacious woman clung to life and fought back death with a kind of pathetic ferocity. On his breast she had more than once half-hysterically sobbed out her longing to live, and her certainty that the end must now come within a few—a very few—short years.

"And I would like to live on for centuries," she had told him once, during a talk of theirs together. "I long so to find out 'what the world will be when the years have died away!' and then to think, Cyril, that in mockery of all this longing I've a heart which may stop its poor, puny flutters any minute, and a body so fragile it can hardly support even those!"

"You two darlings must see *my* little girl and boy," Mrs. Trelawney very soon said to Reggie and Sylvia. "They are up-stairs with their father, but I will send both for them and for him."

Mr. Trelawney entered the room, a little later, with one

of his children on either side of him. He did not wear at all a professional look, or even a scholarly one, with his big, tall frame, his full brown beard, and his clear eyes, that had the flash of metal in them. He seemed indeed a model of superb health and vigor beside his delicate wife.

The children were presented to one another with all possible expedition, but not a very great deal of resultant social success. What potential, future intimacy might have sprung up between them gave no sign of existence now. They moved away at a little distance from their elders and stared at each other with a fixity and intentness that might have been appropriate to an assemblage of juvenile gorgons. Occasionally a remark would fall from Reggie's lips, for Reggie was at nearly all times a very talkative little boy. But it usually fell flat unless Sylvia repeated it, which by and by struck Arthur and Hilary as so tremendously odd and funny a piece of behavior that they both were seized with fits of profuse giggling. At first Reggie was not sure whether or no he ought to resent this development as an impertinence; but finally he concluded to conduct himself as if he had serious doubts on the subject, and took his little sister's hand, holding it and drawing himself up in a somewhat haughty manner at the same time.

The larger children were meanwhile acting to one another in a decidedly more genial way. A recent meeting of the Twentieth Century Club had been mentioned, and Rosalind was giving a rather merry description of Mr. Trelawney's discomfiture during a certain most fanatical and

wrong-headed speech on the subject of international copy-right.

"You were the most miserable of all the authors present," declared Rosalind. "I never saw such a look of blended rage and disgust."

"I'm sure you imagined the look," laughed Trelawney. "I'm not accustomed to think of myself as an author, being the merest compiler of three or four college text-books." And then he continued, much more seriously, "I thought the speech of Mr. Chandler (was not that his name?) a thoroughly atrocious one. At a time like the present, when honest men are doing their best to wipe from our country the stain of shame which so long has clung there, such advocacy of theft from the authors of other lands, and of injustice to those of our own, is especially culpable."

"The man made even *my* blood boil," said Mrs. Trelawney, "and *I've* never written a book, nor ever expect to write one."

"He declared," explained Rosalind to her sister, "that if any one is the author of a work in manuscript he can burn it or lock it up, should he so desire; but that the very hour he publishes it, the work becomes the property of society, and he is not entitled to receive for it the least emolument whatever."

"Neither," chimed in Mr. Trelawney, with his bright smile, "if it be 'Hamlet,' nor if it be 'The Proverbial Philosophy.' Of course there is not the faintest reason why a Tupper should be swindled any more than a Shakespeare;

but two opposite extremes like that make the breadth and reach of the injustice, so to speak, more unpleasantly apparent."

Mrs. Casilear shook her head. "All ideas of that sort are quite repugnant to me," she murmured. "This one of the gentlemen whom you have mentioned seems to me like a bit of rank socialism."

"It is, in a way, socialistic," said Mr. Trelawney.

"And I do so abominate whatever is socialistic!" shuddered Mrs. Casilear.

"I am greatly in sympathy with many socialistic movements," Mrs. Trelawney here said, using a gentle yet distinct emphasis.

"You!" exclaimed Mrs. Casilear; and then she glanced meaningly at Rosalind.

Perhaps Cyril Trelawney saw the look.

"Oh, my wife would imply," he said, with a generalizing amiability about both his voice and manner, "that she is simply not of the conservative kind."

"I did not suppose so," said Mrs. Casilear somewhat primly, as she again glanced at Rosalind. "My sister has told me."

"Told you?" softly echoed Mrs. Trelawney, lifting her brows a little, as she surveyed Mrs. Casilear in her quick, sweet, bright way. "I hope Rosalind has not told you dreadful things about us."

"Dreadful things!" repeated Rosalind. "How could I do that?"

"You might have told radical things," Mrs. Trelawney answered, nodding to Rosalind.

"Well, perhaps I did," Rosalind acquiesced.

"I dislike radicalism," said Mrs. Casilear. "I am sure that Rosalind knows how much I do!"

"But you mustn't take for granted that we are socialists because we are radicals," volunteered Trelawney, in his frank, courteous style, which always suggested a man of the world who accepted his conventionalities more than he loved them, and who was a gentleman of the best breeding because he found no nicer encasement for his own personal expression of many other things altogether nicer.

"Radicals!" faltered Mrs. Casilear uncomfortably. "Radicals, if you will pardon me for saying so, have many peculiarities."

"Of course they have," hastened Mrs. Trelawney, with a kind of soft sharpness, while she fixed her lovely eyes upon Mrs. Casilear. "That is, the slow outside world *calls* them peculiarities."

"Naomi," said her husband, "you must remember that Mrs. Casilear may *be* of this outside world."

"I *am*," said Mrs. Casilear, with an embarrassed decisiveness. She looked again at Rosalind, but only for a moment, and as if she did not expect to find a sympathetic return from the gaze of her sister. "I haven't the least sympathy with advanced theories or beliefs—Rosalind knows that—I bring up my children" (she glanced toward them) "in a strictly orthodox way."

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Mrs. Trelawney shot a gentle look toward *her* children. "And we bring up ours," she said, "in a liberally unorthodox way."

"Unorthodox?" again faltered Mrs. Casilear. "But you surely teach them to *pray*?"

There was a silence. Mr. Trelawney broke it. "Our children are taught to be good," he said. "That means a great deal."

"It does not mean praying to be good," said Mrs. Casilear, with a hint of agitation in her tones.

"Ah, my dear Mrs. Casilear," said Mrs. Trelawney, "it means trying to be good, and that, my husband and I think, is more than merely praying."

Mrs. Casilear rose; she had grown a trifle paler; she kept throwing looks at Rosalind, who sat with a smile on her lips and with eyes averted from these rapid visual appeals.

"You—you mean—you *must* mean," said Mrs. Casilear, with a disarrayed demeanor, "that you—you teach your children *atheism*."

"Agnosticism is not atheism," said Mrs. Trelawney, with perfect suavity, rising also.

Mr. Trelawney now rose, and Rosalind did the same. "We teach our children morality, Mrs. Casilear," he said, "which we believe to be the most real of all religions."

Mrs. Casilear endeavored to laugh pleasantly. "I have always understood," she said, "that morality and religion were one." She went several paces toward her children and stretched out a hand. "Reggie, Sylvia," she called,

and they ran to her. The voice she used and the aggrieved signs in her general mien were unmistakable. She gathered the children close to her, in another minute, and an implication of positive hysteria went with the gestures thus employed. "*My* boy and girl are of the old-fashioned sort," she continued. "I want them to remain old-fashioned, and to believe that morality and religion are one."

"They will remain very old-fashioned indeed," said Mrs. Trelawney placidly, "if they reconcile morality with so-called religion after they are old enough to think. The world, Mrs. Casilear, is getting more wise with each generation; we can't expect our children to accept the bigotries which we were foolishly willing to endorse."

Mrs. Casilear put out her hand to Mrs. Trelawney. "I really *must* be going," she said, in a voice as gelid as though she had uttered some expression of dull antipathy. "It has given me so much pleasure to see you; but I am engaged this afternoon for a reception, and between then and now I have an innumerable lot of little affairs to concern myself with."

Rosalind, standing and watching her sister, silently wondered where was the reception thus glibly mentioned, and what was the innumerable lot of little affairs.

"I have never met such extraordinary people!" fumed Mrs. Casilear, after the carriage was rolling away with herself, Rosalind and the children. "*These* are your Twen-

tieth Century Club friends and ideas! Oh, *Rosalind!* I intend to have a talk with Dr. Presbery, there at the Madison Avenue church where I have taken my pew, about *how to treat* persons who are as *lawless* as that in the bringing up of their children. You never told me that they were so *outrageous*. You said that they were agnostics, but I—I don't think I ever realized what agnostics truly were until this experience taught me!"

"It hasn't taught you much," replied Rosalind calmly. "You didn't give it a chance. You snapped at it as if you were something actually wolfish." Rosalind was smiling, but she grew a trifle more serious as she went on: "I shall state everything, just as it occurred, to Uncle Seth, and ask him what *he* thinks."

Rosalind kept her word. Uncle Seth of late had never had anything to do, whether he were in New York, Paris, Rome or Vienna. He was always tranquilly hungering for his California farm, where he had either possessed, or convinced himself that he possessed, untold pastimes and worriments peculiar to his Western surroundings. He had undoubtedly grown more civilized in his appearance than of old; he had changed his sky and the cut of his coat also. It was not, after all, a prominently modish cut, yet it evinced a resignation to the fashion that ruled. Uncle Seth had long ago told himself that it would never do for him "to leave the girls." He had acquired conviction (possibly by no means unfounded) that, if he should leave them, they would be at the mercy of the first really astute charlatan



who should come along. There were other reasons, too, which the cynic in him would never have openly admitted; these were reasons whose light came to him jocund and halcyon through the prisms of sentiment. It is possible that Uncle Seth had never permitted his own shy, queer spirit to inform him confidentially just how fond he was of "the girls," his two nieces.

Rosalind found her uncle seated in a room which went by the name of the library, though as yet its bookcases were only meagrely stored with books. Uncle Seth had a cloth spread in his lap and several carpenter's tools on a small table at his side. He was busily occupied in making a boy's boat from a large block of wood, and had already filled his impromptu apron with shavings and sticks.

"It's for that little sick chap you got into St. Luke's," he explained to Rosalind. "I went up there and had a talk with him, the other day, and he said he'd like a boat. So I promised I'd rig him up one, and here I am, at it. Never s'posed I could get along half so good's this. 'T all fetches me right back to when I was a boy myself. And much thanks I'll get for doing it. He won't remember he's got it, in a day or two. Not that children are more ungrateful than grown-up folks. But they don't know how to conceal their ingratitude so well, and sometimes, on that account, their lack of polite hypocrisy makes matters all the more painful."

"Poor little Ben Rafferty!" said Rosalind; "you ought to forgive *him*, with those horrid rheumatic sufferings of

his, for all the ingratitude imaginable. But it's ever so sweet of you, Uncle Seth, to take so much time and trouble on the poor little fellow's account."

"No, it isn't," replied the old man, vigorously shaking his head. "There ain't much else here for me to do. I never could read but one book, *Rosalind*,—the book o' nature. I get sleepy if I try to read any other; I don't know what it is,—the print's too black and the paper's too white; they hurt my eyes. Out on the farm, or while I was fighting those 'cute, close-fisted beggars for yours and Car'line's money, 'twas different. Now I think of advertising in the *Herald* that an elderly gentleman would like to procure a little solid employment, which wouldn't take the form of getting his own living and yet would agreeably occupy him for a certain number of hours every day."

"Oh, don't think of it, Uncle Seth. You'd be overwhelmed with letters from elderly ladies matrimonially disposed."

"The devil I would!" said Uncle Seth, in his throat. This was a view of the case no less repellent to him than surprising.

"You're a philosopher, though not always a very cheerful one," said *Rosalind*, putting a hand caressingly on his shoulder. "I sometimes think it's cruel of *Caroline* and me to exile you from the nature that you love so; for I'm sure the reason you love nature as you do, and want to get back to her, is because she has no affectations, no falsehoods, no vain assumptions. She is sincerity itself, and so are you. And you hate shams of all sorts, don't you, Uncle Seth?"

"Well, I s'pose that is only another way of saying that I'm not afraid of solitude."

"And yet you're really so liberal in all your ideas, Uncle Seth. You haven't met the right sorts of people,—the people who hate humbug just as much as you do yourself."

Uncle Seth gave a dry, short laugh. "What would the address of those people be? I guess you'd have to go to the end of the world by way of the nor'west passage to find 'em. Eh?"

"Uncle Seth, *no!* The Trelawneys are people after your own heart, I'm certain. Some day you must pay them a visit with me,—some Saturday, when Dr. Trelawney is at home; he's a professor in a college, you know. Caroline and I have been there to-day, and I want to tell you something that Caroline did, and ask your honest opinion about it." And then Rosalind narrated the little incident which had occurred, as we are aware, during their recent visit at the Trelawneys'.

Uncle Seth, when she finished, was looking at her with half-shut eyes and head placed a good deal sideways. "It's hard to say Car'line was *wrong*," he seemed to muse aloud. "The great point is, she believed she was acting for the best."

"But it was so uncivil of her,—it was so bigoted," asseverated Rosalind. "They had not given her the least reason to treat their children as if Reggie and Sylvia were their moral superiors. Caroline mortified me so!" the girl went on. "I believe, Uncle Seth—I honestly do—that if they

had been Amsterdam or Schenectady children she would not have presumed to make herself so ridiculous. She would have been *afraid*."

"Yes. I see what you mean," said Uncle Seth, beginning to work away industriously at his boat. There had always been a rare and peculiar sympathy between himself and the younger of his two nieces. "I wonder where you get these radical, searching ways of yours," he went on. "I s'pose it must have been from your father. He was always seeing through people and snapping his fingers at the shams life's full of."

"You taught me to think honestly and to stand by my honest convictions," answered Rosalind, with a sweet, fond note in her voice.

"Now you're heaping coals of fire on my head," muttered Uncle Seth. "It's pretty dangerous work, my girl, in this world, to have honest thoughts and act 'em out. Nothing gets folks into trouble quicker than that does."

"Ah, Uncle Seth, you know you don't mean what you're saying."

"Yes I do,—every mortal word of it; I'm never insincere except when I say pretty things about my fellow-creatures."

"But you do pretty things to your fellow-creatures. That boat, for instance; you might have bought fifty a great deal better than the one you're making."

"There's plain speech with a vengeance," said the old man, chuckling softly. "P'raps I'm a better ship-maker than you believe. Still, I won't sound my own horn."

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"You don't need to do so, ever, with me," said Rosalind, gayly, as she stooped and kissed him on one of his gray temples. "You're doing that boat yourself out of sheer good-will and true-hearted sentiment."

"I never had a sentiment in my life," grumbled Uncle Seth. "What's it like?—toothache, . . . headache?"

"No, . . . heartache! And you went to see poor little Benny Rafferty at St. Luke's, and you're always doing those lovely, benevolent things in the quietest, tenderest way. I often wonder, though, how you got to be the free-thinker you are. Now, the Trelawneys are free-thinkers, but then they are readers, scholars; they live in an atmosphere of books. You don't; you say that you never did. But so many of their ideas are just like yours."

Uncle Seth left off whittling at his big block of wood with the large clasp-knife that was among his utensils of carpentry. "I got all my ideas, such as they are," he said, "from watching the sun and the clouds and the stars and the trees and the crops and the grass. I got 'em from hearing the brooks flow and the birds chirp and the winds sing. Nature's a free-thinker, if you only look at her right. She'll tell you what fools we are. And she don't mince matters, either. She blabs things plain out, just like a school-boy. She hasn't got any patience with dodges or dodgers. She's a square consolidated company, that returns a clean dividend every year out of the profits that it earns fairly. She's full of faults and mistakes, but she don't try to conceal 'em. She never puts on airs, either.

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She don't ask you to take her for more nor less'n she's worth. She hasn't got an opera cloak or a Worth dress to her name. She's been telling me not to turn up next Tuesday night at your and Car'line's ball, and I guess I won't."

"Please don't call it a bit *my* ball, Uncle Seth," said Rosalind. "It's entirely Caroline's,—and I dread it, I regret it, more than words can express!"

#### IV.

BUT when Tuesday evening came, Rosalind did not at all look as if she dreaded or regretted the entertainment given by her sister. Youth and good health were the spontaneous and unfailing allies of her temperament. She expected to meet numerous tiresome and uninteresting people, but when the hour for meeting them arrived there was a buoyant prophecy in the appearance of the festal, beflowered drawing rooms that appealed winningly to her unperished ardors of girlhood.

By ten o'clock on Tuesday evening no one had arrived. With all its gayety and brilliance of decoration, the great mansion had a glaring, nude look; it needed the guests in their ball-dresses to harmonize with the blaze of chandeliers and the glory of garlands. From one end to another of the immense drawing-rooms the acute and bounteous light poured down upon breadths of linen "crash," whose colorless blank seemed yearning for the feet of dancers and merry-makers to relieve its monotony. Liveried servants were waiting in the halls. There was a good deal of show, of splendor, of parade, if you please, but there was not a vestige of vulgarity. Mrs. Casilear had been a keen observer while abroad, and where experience had failed her, careful consultations with those whose duty it was to con-

duct her ball in a manner no less luxurious than refined had stood her in excellent stead. At about quarter past ten she descended, magnificently attired, into one of the great drawing-rooms.

For Rosalind to perceive that Mrs. Casilear was excessively nervous did not require more than the most cursory glance.

"How *do* I look, Rosalind?" she asked. "A perfect fright, I suppose? No? *Is* my hair right. I'm so glad. You're *sure*? Don't you think it's horribly late for them to come? Perhaps they're not coming! Perhaps not a soul will turn up!" And she suddenly faced her sister again, after having walked somewhat aimlessly here and there, while now and then watching the fall and flow of her train, across one shoulder.

"There's no use of getting yourself into a frenzy of excitement for nothing," said Rosalind.

"Frenzy of excitement!" cried Mrs. Casilear. "Do I really look as if I were in one?"

"Well, you don't look composed, certainly," replied Rosalind.

"Dear me! I'm so sorry. I wonder if there is anything I—I could *take*. Wine flushes me so. That dress of yours" (taking notice of Rosalind's ball-robe for the first time) "is just too charming for anything. I only wish mine was half as *chic*. You decided to wear nothing except those pearls round your throat? Well, you were right. They're exquisite; you remember what Tiffany said about them in



Paris when we got them there. And now tell me about my diamonds. How do you like their effect?"

"If you want my perfectly frank opinion," said Rosalind, "I think that you have on too many diamonds."

"Oh, but it's right, you know, at a large ball like this. All the swell women abroad do it,—and here, too, if they only happen to have the stones."

"You certainly have them," said Rosalind. "You look overwhelmed, inundated by them. If I were you I wouldn't do that sort of thing *yet*, Caroline. These people who are coming here may worship wealth; I begin to think, from what the Trelawneys and others have told me, that there is nothing *except* wealth held to be in the least degree important by them. But for obvious reasons, Caroline, I would wait, if I were you. Accept my advice: go up-stairs and take off at least half those jewels, and I'm confident you'll not regret it."

Mrs. Casilear's lip curled, and she shook her head with decision. "No," she said, "I sha'n't do anything of the kind. I know perfectly what you mean, Rosalind: they will declare it bad style in *me*, while they'd simply open their eyes respectfully if it were done by Mrs. Amsterdam or Mrs. Poughkeepsie. But let them say what they choose. It will all come right in the end. *There!*"

A bell-peal at the outer door, instantly answered by a footman, caused the last brief, sharp exclamation from Mrs. Casilear. This sound announced the first arrival, and almost immediately afterward carriages came thronging to the

bright-lit Fifth Avenue abode. Fortunately for the two hostesses, many of those people who first entered the rooms were known to both of them. Shaking hands with actual acquaintances put both ladies at their ease, and prepared them for the ceremony and formality of future meetings. A few jaunty society men, young girls, or young married people of both sexes, with whom they had made acquaintance under various circumstances abroad, all entered, as it seemed, in one smiling bevy. Mrs. Golightly Busted, too, was among the earlier arrivals. "The rooms are a *dream*," she told Mrs. Casilear, while effusively pressing the latter's hand. And then a sort of rhapsodical whisper left her lips: "Your costume, my dear, is something marvellous; people are simply *awed* by you!" This was very satisfactory indeed to Mrs. Casilear, for Rosalind's late remarks were still lingering by no means pleasurably in her memory. Not long afterward the rooms began to fill, and scores of guests arrived whom neither of the sisters had ever seen before. Mrs. Casilear and Rosalind would both bow with a blending of dignity and cordiality; the guests would in many cases murmur their own names, but whether they did or not they would always move rather expeditiously onward and be lost in the throng which was now so rapidly augmenting.

There was a certain Mr. Whiteright Abendroth, a New Yorker of New Yorkers, who proved himself just now of excellent service to Mrs. Casilear, though not to Rosalind, who thought him odious and rarely wasted many words upon him.

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"That is Mrs. So-and-so," Mr. Abendroth would contrive to whisper in the ear of Mrs. Casilear. "Very rich; got in about five years ago; husband made his money in a new kind of pickle." Or, of some other arrival, he would declare with an equally inaudible deftness: "The two Thus-and-thus girls. Pushers; not very much money, but lots of brass."

In this fashion a little stream of surreptitious tidings was poured into Mrs. Casilear's otherwise bewildered intelligence. She had depended a good deal upon the help of Whiteright, and she was glad enough to get it now. She had first met him at Nice, and he had followed her to Paris, where he had offered himself to her in marriage. Again in London he had so offered himself, and twice since her return to New York. His persistence irritated while it pleased her. She had no intention of ever marrying him, but he was a part of the patrician world in which she desired to be a power, and for this reason, if no other, she did not seriously rebuff him. But in the circles where Mrs. Casilear wished to shine Whiteright Abendroth shone very dimly indeed. His bald head, his eye-glasses, his yellow moustache, and his slim, almost electrically restless figure, were seen everywhere in the haunts of fashion. But fashion, on her side, was not specially anxious to meet him there, to watch him wave his slender hands like an excited school-girl, to hear him babble his gossip with remorseless volubility. And you might have said of him that there never was and never could be again such a gossip as he. Nobody's affairs were

too sacred, too august, or too disreputable for his prying investigations. He had society at the ends of his fingers, and could have told you with an amazing glibness thousands of genealogical facts concerning it. Until her "society craze" had come upon her Mrs. Casilear had only tolerated him. Afterward she had found in his rattling personalities an interest that seldom flagged.

She blessed him silently this evening; he gave her self-possession; he was a lamp in the dimness, a clew amid the labyrinth. She had never realized until then just how distressing it would be to stand and receive stranger after stranger, with a smile on your lips that endeavored to make your own complete ignorance not seem quite so lamentable as it really was. Whiteright Abendroth had promised to give her some sort of peculiar sign when Mr. Schuylkill Lexington, the popular leader of *cotillons*, should make his appearance, and at last, when a tall, trim, pleasant-looking youth paused in front of her with an elaborate bow, the sign was given.

But Mr. Schuylkill Lexington, in the most courteous phrases, expressed himself unable to accept the honor conferred. He was suffering from a violent cold, and would be obliged to leave at an early hour. Mrs. Casilear felt vexed and tried not to show it. But she was unsuccessful here, and did show it considerably for the next ten or twenty minutes, so that a few people who were covertly watching her in all her bediamonded smartness of apparel, concluded that she had a rather ill-natured cast of countenance. Above

all things does society demand of us to *efface* ourselves; it detests a frown, a pout, or a sour look as cordially as it loves a frivolous, graceful, felicitous one. "I shall be obliged, now, to ask Pinckney Clarke to lead my German," Mrs. Casilear at length murmured to Mr. Abendroth. "He hasn't come yet, has he?"

"He is just entering the door at this very moment," answered Whiteright Abendroth, in his falsetto voice and with his officious, effeminate manner. "I should advise you not to lose a minute," he added, "for it *would* be dreadful if you had to go about searching for a leader. The thing should have been all settled days ago, you know, but——"

"Well, perhaps it should," broke in Mrs. Casilear, not at all genially. "But I had so many other things to think of!" Whiteright Abendroth knew perfectly well that she had felt a little natural reluctance about asking a gentleman to lead her German whom she did not even know by sight. Still, *he* would have volunteered to arrange the matter if he had only been consulted regarding it, and he now flung a side-long look at Rosalind that was by no means amicable. He felt sure that he would have had a great deal more to say about this ball and certain other affairs of Caroline Casilear, if it had not been for that imperious sister of hers, whom he had grown very decidedly to hate.

Mr. Pinckney Clarke was soon asked to undertake the generalship of the *cotillon*, and at once accepted. Mrs. Casilear's anxiety was now relieved, though her disappointment definitely rankled. She wanted her ball to be in every sense

irreproachable. She was flying her kite very high indeed, this evening, and had no idea of lowering it at the hostile demand of circumstance. There was every indication that she had, in a way, conquered circumstance. It was getting to look more and more, now, with each fresh five minutes of time, as if all prophecies regarding the failure of the festivity were simply the airy fabric of malice and slander.

Standing near her sister, Rosalind would accord a supplementary welcome to each new-comer. She made a graceful and charming appendix, as it were, to Mrs. Casilear's more accentuated expression of hospitality. As the guests would bow before her, singly, in pairs or in trios, many remarked her high-bred look, and contrasted it with the *personnel* of her sister, disadvantageously to the latter.

"That is Miss Maturin, isn't it?" said a certain young gentleman to a friend whom he had met in a convenient little post of observation between a fall of heavy tapestry and a monstrous piece of Japanese bronze.

"Yes," said the other; "that's she; she's receiving with her sister, you know."

Both speakers had slipped by the two ladies with conventional and almost meaningless bows. One of them (he who had asked the question regarding Miss Maturin) had for some reason been specially noticed by Rosalind during their recent brief face-to-face encounter. As she lifted her eyes to his countenance a light, strange thrill had passed through her. He was tall, with a figure that combined stateliness and symmetry in an admirable way. He had

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been noted, for several years past, ever since he had first entered New York society, as a man of extraordinary attractions for women. His eyes were large, soft, and of a lucid brown; his hair curled at the temples, and through his delicate silky moustache you could see with how fine a curve his upper lip met the clean-chiselled nostrils above it. Yet this young gentleman (whose name was Carroll Remington) by no means had impressed his many admirers as merely the beau, the ball-room Adonis, the ladies' idol. These he had undoubtedly become, but he was something besides these. He rode well, shot well, possessed both athletic equipments and physical tastes. It had never been said of him that intellect was among his gifts, but neither had it been said that dulness belonged among his shortcomings. He was held to be extremely good-natured, and in the easy-going set with which he was associated this trait meant much to his credit. About his personal fascination women nearly always had a word of eulogy, and not seldom one of enthusiasm as well.

He had been struck by the appearance of Rosalind, and for certain decidedly material reasons he had desired to know her and observe her several weeks ago. He did not expect to meet many of his intimate friends at the present ball. He had heard it sneered at very unsparingly, and even denounced as an unprecedented attempt at social pushing. "I am asked, but shall not go," had grown an oft-repeated phrase for him among his feminine acquaintances, and not a few of his masculine ones as well. For his own part, he had been asked and had meant to go. From the very first he had

meant to go, and to observe a little closely after he got there.

As soon as he discovered that Rosalind was no longer obliged to keep up her series of perfunctory bows, he went and joined her, with that natural affability of manner which might be called the perfection of mingled suavity and repose. Rosalind was talking with Mr. Pinckney Clarke, who had felt himself bound to cultivate a little practical acquaintance with her, considering the distinction which had lately been conferred upon him of leading the German, that evening, in her company.

Pinckney Clarke was one of those young gentlemen whom none of the mammas in New York society considered "desirable," except as a dancing partner for their daughters. Wherever Terpsichore held her sway, there Pinckney Clarke was in his element, his sphere. He danced with a scientific elegance and accuracy; it was pleasure to watch the nimbleness and flexibility of his motions about the floor; nothing of its kind could be more artistically secure and happy than his exquisite dancing. But apart from this endowment, he was a thoroughly clever young fellow. He had been well educated; he knew how to express his ideas with fluency and point; he had sound moral views and the vigorous intention of living up to them. And yet he was regarded with entire indifference by the fashionable world, except where his beautiful dancing was a matter of either attention or discussion. He was a clerk in a Wall Street bank, with very little fortune, with a small monthly salary, with no

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expectations whatever, and with a family connection completely outside the so-termed patrician pale. Rosalind had just begun to tell herself that he was surprisingly sensible, when Carroll Remington came up and put one hand intimately upon his shoulder, addressing the girl herself in his rather lazy but musical and gentle voice a moment afterward.

"Is Pinckney telling you how great a success your ball has already got to be, Miss Maturin?" he said. "That is always the way with this clever Pinckney. He manages to get the innings whenever it's a question of being first to congratulate anybody who richly deserves it."

Pinckney Clarke smiled and looked a trifle embarrassed. He dropped away from Rosalind with an instinctive sort of deference to her new companion. His good conversational gifts, he had long ago learned, were rated as thoroughly unimportant by everybody whenever a reigning favorite like Carroll Remington chose to appear in the field. He, Pinckney Clarke, was deemed notable enough to lead a German, provided no leader of larger eminence and prestige (like Schuylkill Lexington, for example) was to be recruited from select sources.

'Carroll Remington must have some object in approaching Miss Maturin as he had just done,' mused Pinckney Clarke; and therefore the latter, quickly realizing that he now stood no chance whatever with Rosalind until the German began, resignedly withdrew, leaving the renowned charmer to work his characteristic spells in unmolested sorcery. Just as the philosophic and tractable Mr. Clarke

quitted Rosalind's side, he heard Carroll Remington once more say to her in his most winsome tones,—

"I trust you have decided to remain in New York quite through the present winter, Miss Maturin?"

'What a curious chap Remington is!' thought Pinckney Clarke. 'He has a way of making a thoroughly commonplace remark sound as if it were not merely sensible but clever.'

"We shall stay here this winter,—oh, yes," Rosalind said. "As for our future plans, we are very undecided."

"You were abroad last winter, were you not?"

"Yes. We were in Rome and Naples, and afterward, for a little while, in Nice."

"How fond we Americans are of travelling about!" said Remington. "Don't you think it gives us an unfortunate look, sometimes, among foreigners? I mean, as if we were tired of our own country."

"I think that we do get tired of our own country," answered Rosalind,—“tired by crowds, by multitudes. I have noticed that again and again on the continent of Europe. You see so many Americans there of whom you wonder why they should have come. One can scarcely understand how anything except discontentment toward their own land can have brought them there. They wander from place to place, neither amused nor instructed."

Remington laughed. "Well," he said, "I suppose they are more endurable, after all, than the Americans who are ashamed of their country."

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Rosalind looked grave for a moment. "I begin to believe," she presently said, as though not quite sure whether or no it were an admirable thing to say at all, "that hundreds and hundreds of Americans here in New York and other of the Eastern cities *are* ashamed of their country."

"And you are proud of yours?" Remington asked.

"Yes, I'm very proud of it," she said. "I see its faults, but I'm very proud of it, nevertheless." Then she looked steadily into his face for a few seconds, and as she did so it occurred to her that he was more satisfyingly handsome than any man she had ever before met. "Are *you* not proud of your country?" she asked.

He glanced all about him. "I can't help being proud of it," he replied, evading her question by a bit of rather dexterous gallantry, "when I see certain proofs of how finely civilized it is."

"Ah," said Rosalind, "I should hardly call a huge entertainment like this by so flattering a name. It strikes me as more like a lapse backward into cruder conditions."

"What!" he exclaimed, "you're not fond of a beautiful ball like the present one?"

"Are *you*?" she asked. She was watching him more attentively than she herself knew.

"I? Oh, I love this and all kinds of amusement like it. You can't get too much glitter and gayety to please *me*."

"You're a man of fashion, then?"

"I suppose I am. I am fond of the rosiest pippins that grow on the tree of life."

"Sometimes even *they* have a black worm at the core."

"Indeed, yes. It isn't that I think there's much real happiness in living as I live."

"And how *do* you live?—since you've referred to the subject so frankly," Rosalind answered. She did not know his name, as yet; she had heard it spoken by him as he bowed to her sister; but it had been rather indistinctly spoken, and she had now no recollection whatever concerning it.

"I amuse myself," he answered, shrugging his shoulders. "I dare say I'm the sort of fellow whom you would think frivolous beyond words. For, to be quite candid, *you* strike me as rather—well, serious about things. Come, now, haven't I almost hit it, there? *Aren't* you?"

"I'm serious about a good many things," Rosalind said.

"Yes,—I thought so. I don't doubt you could make me feel like going back to school again, and staying there several years, if you only tried."

Rosalind laughed with heartiness. "Oh, you need not be afraid," she said. "I shall not try. It would hardly be civil, on so short an acquaintance, if I were to try. Besides, I might make a dreadful mistake, and find out that you concealed lots of gravity and reflection behind your professed frivolity."

"I assure you, Miss Maturin, I don't attempt any concealments whatever. I'm Carroll Remington to everybody,—a man with a small amount of brains and a very large capacity for enjoyment. I *am* frivolous,—horribly so. I often wish I could be otherwise. Now and then I make a good resolu-

tion or two about caring for things of more moment than those to be classed under the head of light diversion. But——”

Here several new arrivals took place, and Rosalind was obliged to repeat her previous bows and to take the hand, as well, of a rather garrulous old gentleman whom she had met in Venice months ago, and whose profuse and somewhat stilted compliments she found freighted with tedium. When the garrulous old gentleman had moved away she made the unwelcome discovery that Carroll Remington had moved away also. This annoyed her with an unexpected keenness. She stood for a minute or two dismayed by her own annoyance. She could not account for the feeling; it seemed no less illogical than oppressive. What had he said to her? Nothing. What had he suggested to her? Nothing,—as far as her rapid retrospect of his words and demeanor could declare. And yet she had liked him unspeakably. It was odd, bewilderingly odd, how very much she had liked him. He had produced upon her the impression of being a butterfly, a careless *flâneur*, a skimmer over surfaces. And yet some magnetic and unexplainable attraction had so mastered her, all in this brief space of time, that she felt like using her privilege as hostess and going to search him out in the gathering throng which had engulfed him. He talked trifles, it was true, but she had somehow never heard trifles talked in just that way. He was manifestly influenced by all the whimsical codes and forms of society, the mere gossamer falsities that she had long held in aver-

sion; but he presented these very elements of a rooted dislike in astonishingly novel colors. The colors pleased her, she had no defined conception why; she even doubted if they were indeed novel at all. They pleased her; she could not get further than that; she did not specially desire to get further. But she wanted to know more about Mr. Carroll Remington, and as her eye presently fell upon Whiteright Abendroth, who still remained loyally at her sister's elbow, she made her glance an unmistakably beckoning one.

Abendroth was at her side the next instant. "Tell me," she said, "about that Mr. Remington with whom I have just been talking. Do you know him, I mean? I suppose you do."

"Know him?" As he spoke, Mr. Abendroth uttered the short, cackling laugh which she had always thought one of his most unpleasant mannerisms. "I should rather say I did. Carroll Remington? why, he's one of our lady-killers."

"Lady-killers?" repeated Rosalind. The epithet promptly discomfited her.

"Oh, I don't want you to understand that he's a mere senseless dandy," continued Whiteright Abendroth.

"No; I did not consider him one," said Rosalind coolly. "Is he not a great favorite in society?"

"Yes," emphatically replied Abendroth. "He is a great favorite in society. I don't think anybody ever disliked Carroll. He has legions of friends; the men are as fond of him as the women. He never offends a soul; he's thoroughly and deservedly popular. But——"

"But?" questioned Rosalind, lifting her brows a little as the speaker paused.

Abendroth gave a nervous tug at one end of his yellow moustache. He revealed the totally unusual trait of being without the least fluency. "Carroll is—well, don't you know—Carroll *isn't*, I should say," he stammered painfully; and then he paused again, but soon afterward made an abrupt plunge, becoming both lucid and connected, in his wonted style. "The truth is, Miss Rosalind," he now said, "I should call Carroll Remington (and I'm almost certain that nearly everybody who knows him would agree with me) altogether too happy-go-lucky and unbalanced. He had money once, though I don't know how much. He's nearly rid of it all now, or so they tell me. I've heard that he had a bushel or two of debts. But if so, not even these appear to disturb him very much."

"He didn't at all strike me as having a blunted nature," said Rosalind.

"No," Abendroth proceeded; "I don't mean that he has one. But it's a lazy, indifferent nature. He drifts along with the current. Some day the current may land him in a whirlpool. No one knows what he intends to do sooner or later, and there isn't any doubt that he doesn't know, himself."

"He might marry," said Rosalind, a little musingly.

"Humph!" muttered Abendroth. "So he might,—if he could. But the marriageable girls don't like him in that way. They love to walk and talk, and be with him, but marrying him is a different affair."

Mr. Pinckney Clarke now came to ask Rosalind for a dance before the *cotillon* commenced, and she went away to join those who were thus diverting themselves elsewhere. She had not felt at all secure about the efficiency of her dancing, and it markedly reassured her when she found that very smooth progress resulted from her efforts to keep in time and step with Pinckney Clarke. But Pinckney Clarke, as she learned a little later, was a phenomenal partner. Others did not please her half so well, and it is not improbable that she by no means delighted them. Still, the novelty and vivacity of the occasion produced their due inspiriting effect. She could not help liking the whirl and merriment of it all, and by the time that five or six young gentlemen had gathered about her, while she stood fanning herself and almost breathless from recent exercise, forgetfulness of anything like either the folly or insipidity of her surroundings had exerted potent sway. Temporarily, at least, the Trelawneys and the Twentieth Century Club had ceased to exist for her. Here was enjoyment, excitement, preoccupation, of a sort which the youthful heyday in her blood had made for the time irresistible. Her color rose; she had never looked so pretty in her life, though at certain former times she may have looked more dignifiedly handsome. Among her new devotees, however, she saw only one,—Carroll Remington. He had again drawn near her; they had danced together. His dancing was almost clumsy beside that of Pinckney Clarke, and they had frequently not managed to step at all in accord. But Rosalind would rather



have danced three minutes with him than have gone through twenty waltzes or polkas with any other man in the rooms.

He was still beside her, and the others had dropped away, and she was hoping that he would offer her his arm and take her out into the wide, marbled hall, where it was cooler and less heavy of atmosphere, when a touch fell on the girl's wrist that made her turn rather sharply.

"Oh, Caroline," she said. "It's you?"

"Yes." Mrs. Casilear was trying to appear both composed and good-tempered; she was well aware that to appear thus would carry a more *grande dame* kind of suggestiveness. But she felt excessively aggravated, and to conceal her true sensations cost her great secret effort.

"I suppose you've seen," she murmured to her sister, "what a failure the ball is?"

"A failure!" repeated Rosalind, in amazement.

## V.

"Of course it's a failure," were Mrs. Casilear's next low-spoken words. "Whiteright Abendroth says it is, but I didn't need him or anybody else to tell me."

"What do you mean, Caroline?" asked Rosalind, with unlesened amazement. "I thought it was becoming such a successful affair."

Mrs. Casilear shook her head in quick negative, and as she did so the diamonds that encrusted her hair shot forth white fire.

"Successful, Rosalind? No, indeed! It is a failure, as I said. Some of the best men are here, but that is all. The really exclusive women have stayed away; they have stayed away in a body. None of the leading ones have come. It makes me positively ill. I could cry; I could go up-stairs and remain there. I am simply overwhelmed with shame, with—with disgust. I——"

"Caroline," reproved Rosalind. She put her hand on one of Mrs. Casilear's jewelled arms. She actually feared lest her sister's voice should wax betrayingly loud. "I want you to know Mr. Remington," she went on, perhaps merely because a prompt change in the subject seemed advisable to her. And then she made the introduction, saying lightly that it was a second one, yet carried out under much less

confusing circumstances than the first had been. And a little later she had the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Casilear's face take a more cheerful expression. For Carroll Remington swiftly pleased her, as he pleased so many women. But this did not wholly account for her gracious treatment. She had heard of him as a sort of social pet; he interested her "society craze."

The ball had not accomplished what had been hoped from it. The next two or three weeks made this unsparingly plain. A good many ladies of the best fashion managed to leave cards without seeing either of the two sisters; a number of others left no cards at all. Meanwhile the big crowd, so to speak, had accepted Mrs. Casilear. Amid all her folly this woman had the comparative good sense to reflect that the big crowd was not in the least despicable. It would make her a splendid ally hereafter; it was already half the battle to her. Then, too, looked at from certain standpoints, it was in no sense a *leve vulgus*. It really represented a great deal of selectness, of nicety. She had carefully avoided inviting any of those persons on the outskirts of society whose presence at her house would have proved disadvantageous, not to say compromising. Her assemblage had all been composed of the *beau monde*. If the kings and queens had not come to it they had allowed their courtiers to do so.

On learning that Mrs. Casilear had been disappointed by the results of her entertainment, Uncle Seth had worn one of his oddest smiles.

"Seems all so funny to *me*," he told Rosalind. "I kind of sneaked down-stairs, the other night, when the thing was in full blast. I had on my new dress-suit. It felt skimpy all over; I couldn't tell where it gripped me the most. But anyhow I knew I was only half a man in that suit of clothes; a child could have argued with me and beaten me in 'em. So, as I say, I kind of sneaked down-stairs, and,—well, I got a corner in the hall, near those evergreens and things that the musicians played behind, and I just looked into the parlors. 'My!' I soon says to myself; 'how do they tell each other apart?' All the men had the same smirk on their faces, and they all dressed as waiters do. The girls were as like each other as two pieces of glass in a klee'd'scope. That is, they weren't really like at all, only they'd got so jumbled up together that there wasn't any separating 'em. If I'd been one of those young dandies I'd have forgotten whether I'd engaged a pink or a yellow or a green partner. And I guess they do pretty often forget; it seems to me they must."

"Nobody forgot about me in that way," smiled Rosalind. "There was one," she added, in a much lower voice, "whom I was very glad to have remember me as often as he did."

Uncle Seth looked at her rather sharply. "I thought you snapped your fingers at all Car'line's society notions," he said. "I thought you believed in having the world elevate its brains more than its heels."

Rosalind tossed her head a little. "That has nothing to do," she said, "with my liking Mr. Carroll Remington."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Casilear had become delighted that these two young people appeared to have a growing regard for one another. It was true that Carroll Remington had nothing, and that a good many people asserted he had considerably worse than nothing. Still, if he married Rosalind, there was no underrating the consequences of such an alliance. Doors would open to Mrs. Carroll Remington that would remain closed, for at least some time in the future, to Mrs. Casilear. But in case they were thus opened, it would not be at all a difficult proceeding for Mrs. Casilear to slip in at the skirts of her sister. She loved Rosalind far too well to dream of jeopardizing the girl's happiness by an uncongenial marriage. But Rosalind was one to make her own choice if she ever decided to marry; and then what more agreeable choice *could* she make than some young scion of an aristocratic family, such as Carroll Remington? Mrs. Casilear's heart beat quicker while she reflected upon the prospect. Then good-by to struggle and welcome security! *Tout vient à qui sait attendre* might be a true enough creed, but how much better to get one's felicity without waiting for it!

"I think Rosalind Maturin is somehow changed," said Mrs. Trelawney to her husband, one day.

"Changed?" he repeated. "How?"

"It's hard to explain just how, Cyril. A kind of indifference has come over her. She speaks carelessly, tepidly, of almost everything; and she used to be a girl with enthusiasms, you know. About a fortnight ago, if you remember,

she borrowed your marked volume of 'Social Statics,' saying it was a book she had long wanted to read. Well, she returned it to-day, and when I asked her about it she answered me so absently and heedlessly that I almost fancied she had not read it at all."

"Am I wrong in believing that she dresses much more gayly and smartly now than she once did?" asked Trelawney, after seeming to muse for a few seconds."

"Indeed, you're not wrong, Cyril," cried his wife, in her vivid, impressionable way. "The bonnet Rosalind had on this morning was certainly an enchanting affair, and it became her beyond words; but she would never have cared to wear it last month, whatever she may choose to do this. And, besides, her air has altered so in little ways! Sometimes you detect the difference only in the turn of a phrase, and are not sure, then, precisely whether you *have* detected it or not. There is both a languor and an artificiality in the girl that she did not use to have."

"That great ball of theirs is perhaps beginning to produce its effect," said Trelawney.

"Oh, Cyril!" exclaimed his wife. "How you echo my thoughts every now and then! And yet, of all living women, I would have said Rosalind was the least susceptible to mere worldly influences."

"Few people stand tests," said Trelawney. "It's lamentable, but it's true. It's one of those great sombre facts in life which are encouragements to the professional pessimists. 'Just for a handful of silver he left us' is a line that carries

terrible meaning. People are forever pocketing the handful of silver,—sticking the ribbon in their coats. Farewell, then, to the simple and honest love of thought for thought's sake. Falsity and ostentation become the new household gods. Round the banquet-tables of those who have large wealth and are willing to spend it flock new friends, in obsequious droves, who soon make the old ones forgotten. They are not usually friends who have much to say that is worth hearing. But they know how to flatter with skill. The old friends never did that, and the little compunctious thorn in our flesh, which reminds us that they did not, grows by and by a very stingless irritant."

"Oh, I *can't* believe that the mere sham and shallowness of fashionable New York society could ever spoil or even hurt so fine a mind and so fine a nature as Rosalind's! There must be some other reason, Cyril. If so, there's at least satisfaction in feeling that it is fated sooner or later to transpire."

Mrs. Trelawney was right. Another reason existed, and it was not far to seek. For days past Carroll Remington had been preparing himself to hold a certain interview with his own mother. It was an interview from which he shrank, knowing the lady's excessive prejudices. Mrs. Gansevoort Remington lived in a little house in the lower part of Second Avenue, where she had remained for many years past. She had been a beauty in her day, but she was only a decrepit and haggard old woman now. She had for her companion a maiden sister, Miss Van Stryke, pallid and emaciated like

herself. The two old ladies clung to each other in their solitude, and hated modern New York as they had long ago loved old New York, in its provincial and *bourgeois* thrift. Carroll Remington expected to have a very hard time with his mother and his aunt when he had told them of his desire to marry the daughter of Moses Maturin. He, himself, had long ago taken other quarters than theirs. He detested Second Avenue, and he had gone a great deal farther up-town. They had thought it unutterably cruel in him to leave them, but he had accomplished this desertion of his nearest flesh and blood kindred with the same extreme amiability which had belonged to all his actions, good, bad or indifferent. He had wanted to go farther up-town and he had gone. He had never done anything in his whole lifetime which he had not wanted to do, but he had always managed to surround his most wilful and selfish deeds with a complacent sweetness that robbed them of apparent egotism. He had from childhood served himself unrelentingly. But he had also served himself with an appearance (however he contrived it all) of showing consideration to others.

There was something traditionally august to him in his mother's hatred of "new people." He had now made up his mind to ask Rosalind Maturin if she would marry him, and before doing so a sense of inalienable respect for early precepts and dogmas regarding caste had caused him to seek maternal sanction. Not that he would have obeyed maternal discountenance. He would indeed have persevered in his



intent, if to do so had been to inflict torture upon his mother. It was in his nature not to care very much whether he ever inflicted torture upon anybody, so long as he carried out his particular aims. But it must not be thought that he ever clearly realized the dealing of pain to those who helped him in either plans or purposes. His gentle, serene personality always continued the same. He wanted this or that, and smilingly raised his hand to get it. He usually got it, for the very reason, as one might say, that he did not seem to try; he simply smiled, and was lovable in a skin-deep, yet by no means self-conscious, manner. His extraordinary and invincible good temper was forever weaving about his least and greatest indiscretions an enticing, pardonable spell. If he had been born a "rough" of Baxter Street or Hester Street, he might have perpetrated either burglary or murder with a special non-committal grace of his own. As it now was, he had only to blandly antagonize an extremely conservative parent.

But to his amazement, Mrs. Remington and her inseparable sister, Miss Van Stryke, both became clement when they learned that Rosalind was the possessor of a great fortune. Their aristocratic dogmas melted into the most benign concession as soon as they saw the chance of a pecuniary *trouvaille* for Carroll. "I was a fool to consult them," the young man afterward reflected. "With my knowledge of the world I ought to have understood how it would have been. Mother has dinned into my ears since I was a baby that I am a descendant of old Peter Stuyvesant.

But she has only a bare four thousand dollars a year to live on, and her Knickerbocker principles have their price, like everything else."

Not long after his filial talk Carroll decided to ask Rosalind if she would be his wife.

He did so, one evening, while Mrs. Casilear was at the opera, and the coast was therefore temptingly clear. Rosalind burst into tears as he made his offer. There was no doubt that she was now passionately in love with him. She had ceased to consider the question of why or why not, as regarded her devotion, her adoration. She worshipped the man, and that was all. The whole world had changed for her. She had become perfectly unreasoning, perfectly self-satisfied, in at least one particular. Her love was a kind of ecstasy. Besides being an emotional enslavement it was also a mental one. She no longer cared for the intellectual pursuits which had engrossed her but a little time ago. *He* did not care for them, and hence they lost interest to her. On the other hand, he cared for daintiness and luxury in dress, for brilliancy of equipage, for those distinctions of outline and color which wealth, if expended by refinement, can so ably confer. For this reason Rosalind took pleasure in giving orders to her milliners that were sources of golden profit. Mrs. Casilear, proud, enchanted, looked on encouragingly. One afternoon, a shabby hired carriage drove up to the door, and from it alighted two slender, plain-clad females. They were Mrs. Gansevoort Remington and her maiden sister, Miss Van Stryke. Rosalind went down to

see them in a flutter of delight. When it had been recorded of them that they were ladies, and that their deportment left no doubt of this agreeable truth, even the most partisan sort of encomium was compelled to pause; for they were certainly very dull ladies indeed, the erosions of age and of fitful yet persistent illness having told upon whatever graces and accomplishments they had formerly possessed. But Rosalind at once idealized them because they were respectively the mother and aunt of Carroll Remington. Later she said to Mrs. Casilear, who had not been at home during their visit,—

“I am *so* sorry, Caroline, that you missed those two dear women! I can’t just describe the influence of high-breeding that is over them. It is elusive, and yet palpable; it is like the most delicate of perfumes.”

“Gracious me!” said Mrs. Casilear prosaically. “They *must* be real old aristocrats, Rosalind!”

“Oh, they *are*! And it made me feel, while I was with them, as if I could throw my arms round their necks and thank them for being Carroll’s relations. After all, I begin to believe there is a great deal in that idea of birth, of long, good descent.”

“I always said there was,” answered Mrs. Casilear. “I want Reggie and Sylvia to marry just in that way. I shall be dreadfully annoyed if they do not.”

A good many other ladies came to call upon Rosalind after those two old ones from Second Avenue had, as it were, taken the lead. Such visits were, of course, virtually paid

none the less upon Mrs. Casilear than her sister. And the former was now in a state of very triumphant joy. Here were many of the women who had refused to attend her ball! The magic name of Carroll Remington had summoned them hither. She had wanted a quick conquest, and she had secured it almost as speedily as her first anticipations had seemed to promise.

When the extremists of fashion conclude to "take up" a person of great wealth who is fool enough to *be* "taken up," one fact always becomes observable. The adopted millionaire is not merely tolerated thenceforward; he is overwhelmed with attentions, dignities. He soon grows *plus royaliste que le roi*, and if he desires, indeed, to be an actual king it is not hard for him to seize the sceptre of governance. And so it proved with Mrs. Casilear. She found herself rapidly becoming a power in New York society. The magnificence of her home, the splendors of her wardrobe, the glories of her jewels, on a sudden ceased to be called vulgar; they were now quite too closely connected, for that, with the companionship of nabobs and grandees. As to Rosalind, she had grown sacred in the eyes of the latter. Only, as weeks passed on, a single point in connection with the whole delectable matter began rather to annoy Mrs. Casilear; it was the creased rose-leaf under her mattress. Regard for the man whom she had agreed to marry was all very proper in Rosalind; but such positive spiritual genuflection before him as the girl chose to exhibit, passed the patience of any rational observer.

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"My dear," said Mrs. Casilear to her, one day, "*don't* you think that you sometimes place Carroll on too high a pedestal?"

Rosalind started a little. "Why, does it strike you that way?" she returned, surprised.

"It now and then strikes me," said Mrs. Casilear dryly, "that you would not be able to find a pedestal high enough for him."

"I suppose I'm in love with him, if you mean that," was Rosalind's rather haughty answer,—"just as I know that he's in love with *me*."

"I'm sure I hope he *is* in love with you, Rosalind."

"*Hope*, Caroline!"

"Well—you know how slightly men are to be trusted before marriage decides matters."

"Oh, *Caroline*!" cried her sister, with great reproach. "To talk in that way of men at large is one thing. But to say it of *Carroll*! I am just as certain of his love for me as I'm certain the sun is shining at this instant."

"Oh, of course, my dear," replied Mrs. Casilear, giving several short nods of at least would-be conciliation. "That's a very lovely state of mind, too; very! I suppose he's told you of this deep affection."

"Told me!" exclaimed Rosalind, with a smile that lighted her face beautifully. "Every moment that I am near him tells me!"

"Oh, it does?" said Mrs. Casilear, with an intonation of raillery that she could not resist.

"I sometimes imagine," broke forth Rosalind, with a new, tearful light beginning to fill her eyes, "that you believe Carroll Remington would not have asked me to be his wife except—— But no! I can't speak the words," she went on, "and I won't accuse you of really having had such a thought. You have seen him too often not to understand what an ideal gentleman he is,—how everything mean or sordid is despicable to him."

"Oh, pshaw, Rosalind," said Mrs. Casilear, growing irritated; "I've noticed that like nearly all well-bred men he has good manners when he chooses to have them, but occasionally doesn't exert himself in the way of making any choice whatever. And as for my shutting my eyes to the possession on your part of three million dollars, I can't any more do it than—well, than Carroll Remington himself can."

"Carroll does," cried Rosalind; and then she went on, more tumultuously than her sister had almost ever heard her speak before, while the tears fell glittering from her eyes: "I hate the money! I wish I had been born a poor girl. Fate would have drifted us together somehow, and then you would have seen—everybody would have seen—that he would have asked me to marry him for myself alone! You're as cruel as the Trelawneys are, Caroline! They have alienated themselves from me forever. Yes, forever! I paid them the compliment, yesterday, of bringing Carroll to see them. One would have fancied him some commonplace creature, by the way they treated him. I could complain of no special rudeness, but there was an atmosphere of it in

all they said or did. Before we left, I took the chance of privately asking Naomi Trelawney what she and her husband had meant. 'Meant?' she repeated, opening her eyes very wide indeed; 'I think we were both perfectly civil to your promised husband.' 'Oh, civil enough,' I answered, 'but then you were not *yourselves*. You understand me excellently well, Naomi, but you do not choose to appear as if you did. You and Mr. Trelawney both treated Carroll Remington as if he were a most trifling person, and one of no consequence whatever.' And then Naomi's eyes flashed a little, and she bit her lip, actually saying, 'It is for Mr. Remington, I should think, to regulate whether he is to be treated as trifling or the opposite.' I suppose I answered angrily, then; I have almost forgotten just what I replied; her satire was so cruel and so uncalled-for that the occasion would have sanctioned my saying a great deal more than I did say. After some decidedly hot words together, we rejoined Carroll and Mr. Trelawney. I said good-day to Naomi's husband, and got away as soon as possible. But when we had left the house, although Carroll *must* have seen there was something the matter, he was too considerate and gentlemanly to seem even desirous of knowing what had occurred."

'He was probably too indifferent,' said Mrs. Casilear to herself. She did not like the Trelawneys, as we know, and it inflicted no pain upon her to learn that Rosalind had fallen out with them. But her sister's late words made only more evident than previously the burdensome infatuation under which that young lady labored. Still, Mrs. Casilear inwardly

concluded that she had too cogent a cause for thankfulness to borrow trouble from what was, after all, only the florid intensity of Rosalind's happiness. As a matter of course, this fiery temperature, marked by love's thermometer, must moderate after marriage. *Tout cela s'arrangerait.* And now Mrs. Casilear said aloud to her sister,—

"You know, my dear, I never thought these Trelawneys the right sort for you to be intimate with. And it's really very pretty to see you idealize anybody as you do Carroll. If he shouldn't happen positively to deserve your canonization, he may be stimulated into living up to it,—and that will be so nice for both your wedded futures."

One of the vitiating effects produced by such a life of continual self-amusement as that which both Mrs. Casilear and Rosalind now led was the half-unconscious, half-wilful way in which either sister soon found herself neglecting those benign offices of charity that a little while ago had been so zealously undertaken by each. Uncle Seth noticed the change more, perhaps, than any one else except those forlorn creatures who had once been benefited by so much discriminative almsgiving; the old fellow's lips would sometimes wear a very puckered and misanthropic expression as he sat thinking about this peculiarly unwelcome circumstance.

"Ain't it what I've always said?" his secret thoughts would run. "Money's the devil, and human nature's just a puppet-show in those yellow claws of his. For quite a while it all went right with both the girls; they hadn't been used to fat purses; they were like Aladdin before he began to rub



that old lamp and the big imp sprung up. Well, they've rubbed the lamp now, and they've had a talk with the big imp. And there's no telling what fandangoes he'll make 'em dance before he gets through with 'em."

It was very soon after the occurrence of these rather gloomy meditations on Uncle Seth's part that Rosalind approached him with a proposition amazing enough to make that regular throbbing old heart of his give one or two ungovernable flutters.

"Rosalind," he said, staring into her face, "you *can't* mean what you've come here to tell me!" At the same time he knew very well that she had never in her life been more serious.

Thus in so many words came her assurance. "I do wish, Uncle Seth," she added, "to divide my property equally with Carroll Remington."

"Um—m—m . . . yes," murmured Uncle Seth. He had become meditative; he was stroking the tuft at his chin with a slow, loitering hand. "I s'pose you know how much you'd be getting rid of, eh?"

"Yes,—a million-and-a-half. I haven't forgotten. I want to make over a million-and-a-half to my future husband, and keep the rest myself."

"It can't be done," said Uncle Seth, very quietly indeed, after a pause.

"Can't be done?" iterated Rosalind.

"No. Have you talked at all with Mr. Remington on this subject?"

"Oh, certainly not! I haven't said a word. Carroll is so perfectly unmercenary; I never saw anything like it; he thinks no more of money than the air he breathes."

"You don't say so!" replied Uncle Seth, in his throat. "A good many of us don't think about *that* till there's a chance of it's being taken away from us. Then we're apt to make a fuss."

"Carroll hasn't *much* money—or so I believe," protested Rosalind. "I think he did have money, but that something happened to it."

'It got turned into debts,' mentally interpolated the old man, who had looked up the past record of Mr. Carroll Remington with a diligence and accuracy worthy of a police detective. "The fact is, Rosalind," he presently said aloud, "your fortune's got to be let alone for the present,—the principal of it, I mean. You can't touch that; the . . er . . the terms of the investment won't allow you." (Here Uncle Seth wondered whether the cool audacity of his present falsehood would not be seen through, despite that profound trust in himself and that severe ignorance regarding business matters which both Rosalind and her sister had always revealed.) "You see, there's a way of burying money so that a person can't touch it without a warning of two or three years beforehand."

"Two or three years? Dear me!" lamented Rosalind.

"But it's safe, oh, perfectly safe, all that time."

"As if I didn't know *that*," she laughed, "so long as *you* have anything to do with it." Then she seemed to reflect

for a few seconds, looking down and fingering at one of the front buttons of her dress. "Still," she said suddenly, lifting her head, "if I can't touch my principal just now, I've my interest, Uncle Seth. Oh, yes! I'd forgotten that. I've my interest, haven't I?"

"Certainly," assented Uncle Seth, feeling that he was going to be outflanked unless he could hit upon some fresh manoeuvre.

"And I think you told me, about six months ago," continued Rosalind, "that it amounted to nearly a hundred and seventy thousand dollars a year. Well, I'm sure, I haven't spent a quarter of that amount since I've had it to spend. Have I, Uncle Seth?"

"No, I guess you haven't."

"Then why can't a good deal of my interest that I've *left over* from year to year be—be—" (Rosalind sought for a financial word, and failed to find one) "be, as it were, *bunched together*, and——?"

But here a laugh interrupted her, low of sound, yet ostensibly filled with an untold derision and compassion. Uncle Seth now answered her (inwardly shivering all the while lest she should tear his "explanation" into the tatters its flimsiness tempted) that the undrawn interest on her principal had become consolidated with the bulk of her money itself, and was just as hard "to get at" as the original capital. He managed to use several words whose exact "business" definitions Rosalind had never been able to understand, and at the close of his last murky sentence he left her entirely

bewildered as to his own meaning yet with all her wonted confidence in him undisturbed.

Still, creasing her brows in a puzzled way, she presently asked him: "How much money, then, Uncle Seth, am I going to have control of each year?"

"Oh, as fast as you *draw* it you can have all you please," answered Uncle Seth, with a little unhabitual sweep of the hand. "You see, while the interest is . . er . . actively coming in, you *can* draw it; it . . er . . hasn't yet become . . er . . so to speak, solidified."

"But after we are married we may want to spend a great deal of money," said Rosalind. "Perhaps we may want as much as sixty, eighty, or a hundred thousand a year. Or perhaps even more. How is *that* to be managed?"

"Oh, easily enough. I'll see that you get all you want when the time comes. Never fear. I'll give you monthly payments, you know, just as I do now, only they'll be larger, of course."

'If she repeats our talk to Remington,' Uncle Seth mused, a little later, 'my attempted fraud will be nipped in the bud. Then I'll have to try other tactics. Car'line must be called in; she'll give the enemy a few broadsides, even if she don't quiet him,—I wouldn't care much, if Ros'lind wasn't so confoundedly love-sick as not to know her own mind ten minutes at a stretch. If he said to her "Let's go and see how it feels to jump off Brooklyn Bridge together," she'd go—and she'd jump, too. But give 'em both two years of marriage. If by that time Ros'lind asks me to

throw up all custody over her money, I'll do it without a murmur. *Then's* the time I'll be interested in seeing whether or no she'll consent to settle a dollar on him. *Then's* the time.'

Rosalind made no mention to her lover of the extraordinary conversation she had held with Uncle Seth. She had many things to talk with him about besides money; and her account of his own indifference to money had been a perfectly correct one. No nature was ever more free than Carroll's from the slightest mercenary greed. He had often forgotten the amount in his pocket, whether large or small, till the time came for spending it. But he was exceedingly fond of spending it,—or rather of having his environment softened and eased by those aids which it could so amply bestow.

As the year drew toward spring, Rosalind began to talk of her marriage. "I sha'n't be married in May," she said to Mrs. Casilear. "It's unlucky, you know; we've decided on early June."

"You used to scorn all such superstitions," replied Mrs. Casilear. "You used to pride yourself upon scorning them."

"Did I?" said Rosalind. She was silent for several seconds. "I suppose," she presently said, "that in a great many ways I have changed of late."

"Yes, undoubtedly you have," answered Mrs. Casilear.

"And is it not natural enough that I should?" she exclaimed. Her face was glowing, her eyes were shining, as she looked at her sister. "I think that the promised happiness of being *his* wife ought to change any woman!"

## VI.

THE wedding took place in early June. Fashion first thronged the church, and then the Fifth Avenue mansion afterward. Little Sylvia was in a seventh heaven of delight at being allowed to walk with a bevy of other little girls (Amsterdams, Poughkeepsies, Schenectadys, and a few more in whose juvenile veins flowed an American *sang azur* only less untainted), carrying big baskets of roses up to the altar before the bride and bridegroom. The diamonds which the bride wore, and which were understood to be a gift from her sister, shone with phenomenal splendor. She was declared to look radiantly beautiful, too, and Carroll Remington was envied by at least a score of his gay friends. These afterward made it a very merry wedding indeed. It touched Rosalind as she concluded how dearly her husband was loved, how many and sincere were his friends. That is, the outward professions of Harry or Charley or Willie made her thus believe; but in reality the atmosphere which this husband of hers had always breathed was one where true friendship thrived only as a sickly flower, and true love scarcely at all.

Still it needed wiser eyes than Rosalind's were at that hour to find out so disheartening a fact. Jollity reigned with a universal sway. It was a much lovelier day than our June

of New York often gives us; it had the long sweeping breezes and the cool, blue, diamond sky of a May day in England. There was hardly a face at the whole multitudinous wedding that did not deserve to be called smiling. Hardly . . for there was one such face—Uncle Seth's.

Nobody was particularly civil to Uncle Seth, and he did not, for that matter, desire anybody to be. Indeed, he knew very few of the people present, whether jaunty or courtly, with their furbelows and frock coats, their smart bonnets and their spreading *boutonnieres*. Now and then he would seek out Sylvia and Reggie in the great throng, and make sure that they were happy and wanted nothing. And sometimes he would steal a glance at Rosalind's absolutely beautiful face, with its flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes.

Despite the cynic vein that ran darkly through it, his nature was too intrinsically fine and honest a one not to be repelled by all this pseudo-patrician element in New York society. 'They're most of 'em fools,' he had told himself some time ago; 'you can see that with half an eye. A girl like Ros'lind could never stand 'em long, unless this head-over-ears attachment of hers lasted right on,—as I hope in the name of all that's merciful it may! They've got no place at all in our country. There isn't one of 'em that wouldn't have a king or an emperor here if he or she could be a grand duke or a princess. It's the old European spirit right over again, the spirit we tried to kill here in 1776. It's caste, fed and aided by the power of rich noodles,—whose only power lies in their *being* rich. Wherever you see caste

putting her nose in the air and sniffing all about her, with a manner that seems to say, "I'm safe here, I can stay awhile,"—just as she's doing in New York to-day,—be certain that democracy, liberty, and even the common rights of man would have as hard a time of it again as they ever had, if that Satan-born vixen could only work her will.'

Almost immediately after the wedding, Carroll Remington and his wife sailed for Europe. They had intended to be gone but three or four months; yet, when October came they still remained absent, and finally Rosalind wrote that they had decided to postpone their home-coming at least a year longer. They postponed it, in all, two years. More than once Mrs. Casilear was on the verge of going out to join them, but attractions of an almost intoxicating potency delayed her here. She had purchased a superb country place on the Newport cliffs, and her summers were no less colored with merry-making than were her winters. Society now humbled itself in the dust before her, and that weariness which is the shadow of conquest had inevitably touched her spirits. It was no longer an exciting novelty of experience; she had seen *le dessous des cartes*, and she possessed a clear idea of how absurdly meaningless was the game. And yet she would not have surrendered her new ermines and her fresh-won tiara for double that very fortune which had been instrumental in securing them. She now had no higher place to reach; she was an acknowledged leader of New York fashion. She had received the signal honor of being asked to make one of the ladies' reception-committee at the



Assemblies. She had been selected by the august organizer and custodian of the Patriarchs to lead with him, on one particular occasion, the march of ladies and gentlemen down to supper,—a distinction memorable enough when we consider that less than three years ago she had been yearning even to attend one of these noteworthy balls. Her own entertainments at Newport had been godsend to at least twenty “society correspondents,” who had written about her orchids and her tapestries and her marvellous viands with impassioned fervor. In New York she had conceived the idea of giving a *musical* and hiring the services of certain very celebrated singers, besides those of a famous pianist and equally famous violinist to divert her guests. The prices asked by these artists were enormous. At first she felt staggered by the amount which it would all make in the aggregate. But a little later she smiled to herself, and said to her own thoughts: ‘Why should I *not*? These thousands are to me the merest nothing. Uncle Seth may say something sarcastic when he sees the checks, but he *can’t* say that I’m not able to afford them.’ So the *musical* was given, and proved an overwhelming success. It was this most brilliant affair that caused her to take a future position among the supreme social leaders. There were a few people with very Dutch names and rather lean purses who talked about not being willing to know her. But then these dissenters had never been called on to refuse the opportunity of doing so. There was nothing in their attitudes, either, except a commingled jealousy and snobbery; since, although

her father had been Moses Maturin, a self-made man of the people, it is just as well to have no progenitors worth speaking about as to have a lot of emigrant Hollanders who would inflict a sense of disgrace on their descendants if brought to life again.

Whiteright Abendroth clung to her skirts as of old. He had very firmly made up his mind to marry her if he could. Mrs. Casilear allowed him to try, and the world wondered whether or no he might not be successful. He cherished, meanwhile, his unrelenting hate toward the absent Rosalind, whom he believed his determined foe. He persisted in thinking that his ultimate success as the wooer of Mrs. Casilear would largely depend upon Rosalind's continued absence. It might be true enough that he was thought a rather second-rate person, in spite of his good name and unquestionable position; but he had somehow acquired an intimate place in the toleration of Mrs. Casilear, and no other suitor had as yet been preferred to him. In fact, there were really no other suitors whatever. Mrs. Casilear had a way of coldly discountenancing all such aspiration, of nipping matrimonial ambitions in the bud as soon as they became more than vaguely apparent. Abendroth knew well that she might do worse than accept him. After all, it would not have been so bad a match. A woman of her great wealth could not be expected to marry a man whose bank account equalled her own; and women thus favored had often stooped much lower than marriage with a Whiteright Abendroth. Besides, in his way, he loved her. It was her fortune that

had first attracted him, but now it was her personality also. His funds of sentiment had always been a limited supply. But in so far as he could feel any attachment based upon unselfish motives, he was now possessed by a genuine tenderness and an amorous loyalty.

Mrs. Golightly Busteed had profited amazingly through the social rise of Mrs. Casilear. The latter had needed a certain help and guidance after the decisive change in her prospects, and Mrs. Busteed had made every sort of effort to prove herself indispensable as a counselling assistant. Her new place was decidedly servile, perhaps, but one of untold perquisites. She had now acquired a foothold among the exclusionists which surprised herself. But she still preserved her cult of the intellectual. You would find her at one of the most select Delmonico dances, but you would find her also at the Twentieth Century Club, when the sad-eyed socialist Pole, Zobiesko, read a burningly audacious paper which was replied to by the famous after-dinner wit and orator, Judkins P. Joralemon, whom certain persons present thought so unpardonably flippant and certain others considered to have taken just the tone of pitiless railery needed for opinions of Zobiesko's incendiary kind. Mrs. Busteed enjoyed the Twentieth Century Club, and even places most uncompromisingly Bohemian in their character, far more than she enjoyed Delmonico dances. But she was that lamentable being, a woman with brains who felt the continual unhealthy yearning to be seen where caste, not mental capacity, was held of account. Originally honest

enough, no doubt, she had resorted to petty deceits and chicaneries until conscience had almost ceased to exist as her moral monitor in any but matters of the largest concern. There was no small hypocrisy, no trivial falsehood, in which she would not deal as a means of bettering her worldly station. Mrs. Casilear had thus far been the most powerful card that she had played. She disliked the idea of Rosalind's return as cordially as Whiteright Abendroth did, and for reasons not dissimilar from his own. She was spending a precious fortnight of summer days in Mrs. Casilear's beautiful Newport home, when most unexpectedly, one morning, that lady, after reading a certain letter, said,—

“Rosalind and her husband will sail for home on the Etruria next week.”

“How delightful!” Mrs. Busteed exclaimed. She might, with tenfold more truth, have exclaimed, “How odious!” for that is what she inwardly felt.

Rosalind and her husband, on reaching these shores, went directly to Newport. Mrs. Casilear had not been twenty minutes with her sister before remarking in her an alteration that dealt the sharpest blow of surprise.

“You have the most adorable home for the summer,” Rosalind said. “I have seen nothing prettier in all my travels. Pray tell me—is Newport very gay this season?”

“Immensely so,” replied Mrs. Casilear. “Everybody is here; everybody is giving entertainments.”

“And I suppose you know everybody,” said Rosalind.

The sisters' eyes met. Rosalind uttered the softest and mellowest of laughs. It was somehow a laugh that startled Mrs. Casilear. It was full of music and languor; it was the sort of laugh that might have been called extremely patrician. But it was artificial, factitious; it was not Rosalind.

"Do you remember how I used to rebuke you for what I thought your absurd craze?" Rosalind continued.

"Have you ceased to think it was one?" asked Mrs. Casilear.

"I've ceased to think very much about those matters; I take them for granted."

"You mean you accept them because Carroll does?"

"Carroll!" And then came another laugh, loitering, uncharacteristic. "Well, no doubt you are right." A peculiar smile crept, now, between her lips. "If it had not been for Carroll I suppose I would not have accepted them. I would have remained what I once was."

Mrs. Casilear gave her sister a sharp look. "You have a strange way of saying that, Rosalind."

"Strange?" repeated Rosalind.

"Strikingly so—for you."

"You forget, my dear Caroline. It is a good while since we saw each other."

"You make me feel as if it were longer than it is. You were very much in love with Carroll then. I have half suspected——" But here Mrs. Casilear paused, as though fearful of giving offence.

Rosalind did not show a shadow of any, however. "Suspect entirely," she said, "and impart to me your full suspicion."

"You're sure, Rosalind," said her sister, "that you'll not be annoyed if I do?"

"Yes. I promise not to be."

"Well, then, my suspicion is this: you're *not* so much in love with your husband as you once were."

"Ah, is that all?" asked Rosalind. She got up from the chair in which she was seated and drew another close to Mrs. Casilear, sinking into it while she continued: "Now that you're a *femme du monde*, my dear Caroline, you must really cultivate a little more quickness of perception. Such dulness, begging your pardon, will land you in some unpalatable annoyance—not to say downright difficulty."

Mrs. Casilear gazed steadily into the other's face. She could see lines of care and even weariness in it; but it was no less beautiful than before; indeed, that air of delicate distinction which the younger sister had always possessed was even more evident than it had been of old. Mrs. Casilear felt a little harmlessly-jealous pang as she now observed this; all her own efforts to resemble what we call the high-bred type could not achieve that which Mrs. Carroll Remington wore in the most unconscious of manners.

"Rosalind," she now exclaimed, a trifle petulantly, "are you laughing at me?"

Rosalind shook her head somewhat sadly. "I never

laugh at people,—that is, not nowadays. No doubt it's because I might so easily laugh at myself."

"Laugh at yourself, Rosalind? How?"

She laid one hand on Mrs. Casilear's wrist, and stooping forward, peered up into her face. "I remember you never *were* good at guessing things. I should have thought you would already have seen with the greatest plainness that there is not a vestige in my heart of the love I once felt for Carroll Remington."

"Rosalind!"

"Oh, it's true; not a vestige. I'm a horribly disappointed woman. You will say that others saw he did not care a feather for me,—that he was marrying me solely for my money, and that I should have perceived what everybody else found so clear. That *I should have* perceived it! Ah, the mockery of my position in those other days? If a thousand people had told me the truth I would not have believed them; I was too spellbound and infatuated to do so. And the drearily humorous part of it is that he, Carroll Remington himself, had never told me that he loved me. He had allowed me to take it all for granted. And how miserably I *did* take it so! I meant to write you, Caroline, from over there in Europe when I had realized in all its complete, glaring irony just what a blunder I had made. I began at least ten separate letters to you at ten separate times; one or two were blotted with my tears, I believe, though I have long ago got over *that* folly. But at last I said,—‘*Cela n'en vaut pas la peine*. We shall meet, and

then I can tell her all; I can tell it without sentimentalism, and not as I should perhaps be silly enough to write it.' "

"You've told it without sentimentalism now," said Mrs. Casilear. She looked decidedly shocked.

Rosalind made a movement of snapping her fingers in the air. "What on earth would you have? I thought I had married a Romeo; he has turned out to be made of the baldest prose, from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. One could as soon have gone on loving a man of wax or plaster."

"Dear, dear," softly lamented Mrs. Casilear. "Made of prose, Rosalind? Nearly all the sensible people in the world are. What are his particular faults?"

"He has none, outwardly."

"None?"

"Not one that I have ever been able to discover. He is amiability itself, as you know, and his manners are exquisite."

"Well, then, what faults has he inwardly?"

Rosalind was silent for several minutes. She had drooped her head, and was staring down at her own hands, clasped in her lap. Suddenly she lifted her head, and there was a look on her face that her sister had surely never seen there before,—a look of blended fatigue, disgust and pain.

"His nature is quite shallow," she said; "but it is also fatally cruel. He is capable of inflicting the keenest suffering upon any one who loves him, but he rarely does it without a smile."



"And *you* no longer care for him in the least, Rosalind? You mean it, dear?"

She rose, and her eyes flashed, though her voice was collected enough.

"I?" she said . . . "I despise him."

## VII.

MRS. CASILEAR so learned what the change in her sister really was. Rosalind's acceptance of fashionable life represented a sort of compromise with her own misery. Existence had dealt her a blow of the heaviest disappointment; she strove to deaden the suffering it caused her by joining in a whirl that she knew to be aimless enough, but where she also knew there would be at least the noise of laughter and the dazzle of pretension.

And meanwhile her old pursuits and sympathies would sometimes beckon to her, like far-away phantasmal hands. But she would tell herself regretfully, contritely, that neither in a mental nor moral sense was she fitted for the contemplation of those healthier and purer ideals. They made too fine a music for her now; the coarse, brassy clangors were better, since at least these roused no memories. Calm philosophy, earnest and catholic thinking, the study of wise and helpful charities,—all this belonged to a deplored past. Occasionally, at the present day, she would give alms to some beggar who sought them of her; she would allow the placing of her name on some rather pharisaical subscription list. But the many little merciful deeds of giving that had once both solaced her leisure and satisfied her sense of justice, the personal intercourse with poverty and all that

spiritual elevation and expansion which a power rationally to relieve its worst needs will engender,—such experiences had become indeed remote. Like those happy periods of converse at the Trelawneys', when speculation, analysis and self-introspection reigned as the sweet, severe Muses, they were never to return!

That summer, as we have heard Mrs. Casilear declare, was an excessively gay one, even for Newport. In her present rôle it must be confessed that Rosalind was fascinating. She entirely eclipsed her sister in the power of amusing people; she had a great deal of natural humor, and could exert its influence without the faintest apparent effort. Those who can make the world laugh whenever they will to do so, possess a gift more precious than that of beauty and nearly equal to that of wealth. But Rosalind had both wealth and beauty besides. After a while no entertainment, whether of the day or the night, was thought properly effectual without her. Carroll Remington, too, had preserved his popularity; they were usually seen together at the same places, but not always, and they did not, for this reason, usually arrive or depart together. Somehow no one ever thought to accuse Carroll of the least indifference toward his wife; he handed her with too devoted and amiable an air her fan, her gloves, her cloak. As for Rosalind, if she had had fewer admirers than those who now rapidly gathered to do her homage, reports might easily have arisen that she looked with careless eyes upon her marriage vows. The truth was, she regarded all her devo-

tees with an equal favor and an equal innate coldness. Deep at her heart this unhappy woman felt a kind of lethargy which she had of late told herself that nothing could shatter. She was destined, however, to find her own judgment in error here, and swiftly, and in a most stormy way.

It had been real joy to her, notwithstanding, that she could once again kiss Uncle Seth on both his parchment-like cheeks, and give either of the children, Reggie and Sylvia, a loving embrace. The children had grown almost out of her memory of them; she had a longing thrill to see again the little boy and the little girl she had left, and not these dear yet alarmingly mature substitutes.

"I don't think I look a bit different, Aunt Rosalind," said Reggie, with hurt dignity, "from the way I looked when you got married and went to Europe. I've been staring at myself in the glass, and I can't see the least speck of change in me."

"Reggie looks more at himself in the glass, anyway, than he used to, Aunt Rosalind," declared Sylvia, with ruthless candor.

"Does he?" frowned their aunt. "I'm sorry to hear it of him."

"It's knowing little girls so much," further divulged Sylvia. "We belong to a dancing class now, and we see lots of little girls—and boys, too. They come to visit us and we go to visit them."

Reggie had colored to his ears. "I guess Sylvia judges other persons by herself," he said, with scathing sarcasm. He had learned that formula of rebuke at the dancing class.

Rosalind took her niece's golden head fondlingly between both her hands. Its locks had turned a shade or two darker, and were not so airily flossy as of old. "And doesn't Sylvia always agree with everything you say, Reggie," she asked, "and try to imitate you in everything?"

"Oh, no. Indeed, no!" asseverated Reggie, whose vengeful desire was not yet appeased. "She has too many *other* boys to think about, nowadays. I'm cast in the shade."

"Oh, Reggie!" appealed Sylvia, whose turn it now was to blush, and most profusely, in spite of her very offended and reproachful accent.

It was not by any means as pleasant as this for Rosalind to talk with Uncle Seth. The old man's sharp eyes appeared to pierce her like needles, every now and then. Of his two nieces she had been his favorite, and he detected her apathy of spirit quite as keenly as he did the feverish unrest that overlay it.

"Feel tired?" he asked her, in his abrupt, elliptical way, almost the first time they were really alone together in her sister's beautiful, roomy, ocean-fronting house.

"Tired, Uncle Seth? Why, no. I had a long sleep this morning; still, those theatricals at the Casino were rather tiresome, as all amateur performances are apt to be."

He shook his head. "I don't mean tired like that," he returned.

She gave a start, and searched his face, which the wrinkles had not spared during her absence. "Oh, what a strange way to put it!" she said. "But you always were an

oddity, weren't you, Uncle Seth? Tired? Yes, I *am*! And how quickly you saw!"

"It was plain as the nose on my face," said Uncle Seth, "and that's never been called obscure. You're tired of him," he went on, with more than a hint of austerity, "and you're tired of yourself."

"I might well be," acquiesced Rosalind, staring downward as if at her wedding-ring. "I made such a blunder!"

It was Uncle Seth's turn to give a little movement of surprise, for doubtless he had not expected anything like this quickness of concession on the part of his niece. "Blunder's a pretty strong word," he muttered.

"Oh, Uncle Seth," she broke forth, "it's no stronger a one than the whole affair has deserved!" And then, in a little while, she had told him very much what we have heard her tell Mrs. Casilear.

"I knew all along he wasn't worth more'n one of his own old neck-ties," Uncle Seth at length remarked. "But what was the use of telling *you* so?"

"No use," she conceded, pensively.

He watched her, for a moment, as she sat with bowed head and lowered eyes. She was excessively dear to him, and she had never seemed dearer than at this particular time. "'Twould have been like arguing with a rainy day for not letting the sun shine," he murmured, in tones that, curiously enough, had not a hint of fault-finding; "'twould have been like telling a mother her first baby was a fright."

She said nothing. He turned and looked at the ocean,

flashingly visible from the upper windows of the apartment in which they sat. Perhaps the very grandeur of its luminous freedom brought closer to him the captivity which he now knew was irksome to her. He soon fixed his eyes upon her face again, and slowly, softly asked,—

“Do you make him an allowance out of your own money?”

“Yes. I began that way at first, and I’ve kept it up ever since. There’s so much money, you know,” she finished, with a smile at the edges of her lips that seemed wearily to add, “and so little happiness!”

“I suppose you donate him a good deal every year,” said Uncle Seth; “don’t you, now?”

She named the sum, without an instant of hesitation. Uncle Seth gave a low whistle. “What in the name of dissipation and extravagance do you think he does with all that money every year?”

She shrugged her shoulders, expressing by this simple act the most profound indifference. “I have not an idea, really. He never tells me.”

“Perhaps he saves a good deal of it?”

“No; for he was in debt last year in Paris. It wasn’t for much, but I happen to know that he needed money just before we left there.”

“He must lead a nonsensically expensive life then.”

“He does; he’s extravagant enough, Heaven knows.” She paused here, and her voice changed a little. “But he’s not dissipated.”

"You mean he doesn't drink?"

"Oh, he drinks as other men do. I've known him to drink a little too much, sometimes. . . . I recollect how it shocked me to think my idol could be made the worse for champagne. But these attacks are rare with him, and not violent. I scarcely know a man of fashion who is not more intemperate than he. . . . No, Uncle Seth, I did not mean dissipated in that way. I was referring to——" Her voice fell, and Uncle Seth immediately said,—

"I understand. . . . So you think there's no trouble of that kind, eh?"

"Think!" she cried, and her swift frown, the acute rays that shot from her eyes, the tightened look about her lips, changed her entire face in a second. "I know; I am certain. If I were at all doubtful, I——" But she did not finish her sentence. She broke into a laugh the next minute, and a decidedly merry one. "Let us change the subject, Uncle Seth. What do you find to do up here? Does it bore you? Have you been making any boats for the boys at Newport? If your powers in that way were only to transpire *here*, how unmercifully all the little fellows would besiege you!"

'She no longer cares for him the least in the world,' mused Uncle Seth, an hour or two afterward. 'She has been disappointed by him in the forlornest way. And yet she still believes him decent enough to recollect whose dollars fill his purse and who bears his name. Well, well . . . Poor Rosalind! I'm afraid there are worse breakers ahead yet!'

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He had often proved a shrewd prophet but never a more intuitively competent one than now.

Rosalind soon showed herself a merciless critic, in her sister's hearing, of those two politic and astute adherents, Mrs. Golightly Busted and Mr. Whiteright Abendroth.

"I can't see, Caroline," she said, "why you allow two such people to be your intimates."

"They are both useful in their different ways," replied Mrs. Casilear. The gratification of her "society craze" had not softened her; it rarely produces any such effect. She took narrower and colder views of life than she had ever done before. She had breathed that almost miasmatic air of New York snobbery, and its bane had entered her blood. Even her motherhood had suffered, since the love that she bore her children was tinctured with a silly ambition to have them as prominent in a juvenile *meilleur monde* as she herself was in surroundings of a like sort.

"You can't think, Rosalind," her sister went on, "how convenient I have often found it to have Mrs. Busted at my elbow. She has saved me lots of trouble."

"And taken her price for it, no doubt."

"Her price, Rosalind?"

"Certainly. Where you went, thither went she. If not always, nearly always. You tell me that she stayed with you three weeks this summer, and that she would be staying here still if you had not at last hinted, without a spark of pity, that you would be glad to have her go."

"Very true. That's one of the entirely unendurable things about the woman; she can't afford to take offence."

Rosalind felt herself color a little at the delivery of such an exquisitely vulgar sentiment by one of her own blood. But she recognized the ring of it; she had seen enough of the "best" New York people to know that they not seldom outraged taste in just this fearless fashion.

"I should think that would be quite the most unendurable thing about her," Rosalind said. "But what of Mr. Abendroth? Can he not afford to take offence, either?"

"Oh, I shouldn't very much care if he did; and I think he very plainly understands it."

"Perhaps not so plainly as you imagine."

"What on earth, my dear Rosalind, *do* you mean?"

"That he expects to marry you."

"Marry *him*? I?" Mrs. Casilear exclaimed, though with a severity in the laugh, as though mirth and annoyance were clashing. "I would almost as soon think of marrying Monsieur Colot, my *chef*."

"I didn't say you intended to marry him," persisted Rosalind.

"Nonsense," lightly fumed Mrs. Casilear. "As if his offering himself made any real difference! Why, actually, I should feel quite lost, nowadays, if he didn't do it at the beginning of about every third month. It would be like not getting any bills from one's tradespeople, or some such absurdly unusual thing."

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"But, my dear Caroline, the man expects to marry you. Whatever answers you have given him, they have not, I assure you, deprived him of hope."

In this conversation, as Rosalind further conducted it, she induced her sister to tolerate no longer the attentions of Whiteright Abendroth. "You may smile," she argued, "and say to me, '*il n'est pas compromettant*,' but the world will sooner or later think otherwise. Besides, there's a kind of perpetual comic threat to the dignity of any woman in having a feather-headed fellow like that dancing attendance upon her wherever she goes. By and by they'll be nick-naming you 'Mrs. Abendroth,' and whispering pretty little scandals about you at five o'clock teas. You've other admirers in plenty, now; keep them all near you, but keep them at a safe distance. Never allow any of them to approach as closely as he has done,—and dismiss *him* expeditiously, but without a quarrel."

Whiteright Abendroth felt the effect of this counsel a few days later. He ground his teeth under it, but such manifestations were wholly futile. Patronage had withdrawn itself, and hope fled in its wake. Rosalind, as he had not a doubt, was behind all his new discomfiture. He had hated her before, but his hate now almost sickened him. His was just the spirit to cast about for some mode of revenge, and he finally hit upon one which he afterward blamed himself for not having discovered sooner, since it now appeared so obvious.

He believed that Rosalind still loved her husband. No

one had ever told him to the contrary, and she had as yet been too short a time at home again for the frigidity and torpor of her indifference to transpire publicly. She had married him for love; otherwise her having married him at all seemed a thing inconceivable. And meanwhile his infidelities were so openly carried on as to be a positive marital insult. Of course Rosalind did not know of them. It would be easier to know in Newport than in Paris, or London, or Rome; still, even here it was not so very easy for a wife to find out; everybody else might do so before she herself did.

"What if *I* tell her?" thought Mr. Whiteright Abendroth. "I'm going abroad again soon; my game with the widow is quite up, thanks to this same interfering sister. But I might leave a Parthian shaft behind me. Suppose I do."

He did. There was a brilliant garden-party one afternoon, at an estate which ranked among the most beautiful and luxurious of all in our unique little marine city. The sky overhead, that day, was like some immense blue pavilion through which hundreds of invisible wind-spirits were wandering. You could not tell for five minutes at a time precisely which way the wind blew. At one instant it seemed to be hurrying straight from Narragansett Pier; at another it seemed to rush cool and salty from remote seaspaces. The magnificent lawn was like a huge unrolled rug of emerald velvet; it stopped just where the sheer, light-gray, eroded cliffs began, spotted at intervals with flower-

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beds whose geranium and coleus blazed like fallen banners. Gay-striped tents, full of merry tea-drinkers, flapped their scarlet borders in the gale. As Rosalind crossed from one of these to another, Abendroth slipped up to her side.

"The garden-party is a great success, isn't it?" he began.

"Oh, decidedly," returned Rosalind, who had never been uncivil to him, notwithstanding her great dislike of his intimacy with her sister.

"I see that Mrs. Casilear is here."

"Yes—she is in the house."

"I know it. I've spoken to her. She was not remarkably nice, however. She seldom is, nowadays. I may say, indeed, that she never is,—and owing to you."

"To me?" repeated Rosalind, off her guard.

"Yes. The whole affair dates from your return. Mrs. Casilear and I were the best of friends until you came back from abroad."

"Indeed!"

"But you, for some reason, thought you'd alter all that."

"Really, Mr. Abendroth," said Rosalind, beginning to move onward, and feeling her face flush a little guiltily under his irate eye, "your powers of clairvoyance appear to be very remarkable. I had no idea you possessed them."

"Perhaps if you had had such an idea you would not have played the part you did play."

His manner incensed Rosalind while it disarmed her. She had never seen him at once so candid and so serious. It was just as though he had taken off a mask of flippancy

and insincerity, to stand before her as the real Whiteright Abendroth, whom scarcely a living soul had ever seen till now.

"So you think I have influenced my sister against you?" she asked.

"I know it. I don't ask you either to deny or affirm that you've done so, for I simply know that you *have*. And I've heard of more generous things, Mrs. Remington. You told your sister, no doubt, that I was that very odious kind of person, a fortune-hunter. This, if you did say it, is, I assure you, the most complete mistake. Still, even provided it had *not* been, I can't help feeling that my right of assuming such a character is quite as good as Carroll Remington's."

Rosalind felt herself grow pale with indignation. "I suppose, too," she said freezingly, "that the rights of all so-called gentlemen are equal when it becomes a matter of saying impertinent things to women."

He answered her with a placid, dogged blandness. "The truth is very often called an impertinence by those not desirous of hearing it. But there is a truth, Mrs. Remington, that I might days ago have told *you* regarding your own husband, yet which I refrained from telling you, out of kindness alone. As I can't help thinking, you are not so very admirably married yourself that you should be so excessively careful about the matrimonial future of your sister. Here,—do you see these two letters?" At this point he drew forth two envelopes, tied together by a delicate ligature of sewing-silk, and held them so close to Rosalind that she could both

read the address on the one uppermost and recognize in whose hand it had been written. "Those are two letters sent by your husband to that lady (not by any means a spotless being, as you may or may not know), since you and he came here to sojourn at Newport. I have no hesitation, if you care to learn, in telling you that I procured them very directly indeed. I bought them, in fact, of their owner. She is so horribly commercial a little wretch that she would sell possessions much more sacred than these. Do you want them? They prove your husband to be unfaithful to you, as I don't doubt he has been almost ever since you married him."

He held out the letters, and smiled as he did so. He saw that she had grown very white, and it pleased him keenly to discern in this a sign that she had been wholly ignorant concerning Carroll's vicious courses. It pleased him still more when she extended a tremulous hand, saying, in a very unsteady voice,—

"Any one capable of taking such a revenge as this would be capable of doing worse. If you *have* resorted to trickery you have put yourself in a position by no means to be envied."

He lifted his shoulders, and something of his effeminate manner, falsetto voice and cackling laugh now became evident once more, as Rosalind quietly placed the two letters out of sight.

"I have but one motive, Mrs. Remington,—a revengeful motive, I acknowledge it. If those letters don't convince

you that you made a mistake in giving your hand to Carroll Remington, they will at least render you watchful in the future, when you will be certain to find out exactly what sort of a man you have married. . . . Good afternoon." Here Abendroth drew backward a step or two, lifting his hat very politely. "I really think that I could have made you an irreproachable brother-in-law,—a much better one, no doubt, than the enemy you have forced me into becoming. Still, I make a fairly capable enemy, too,—as you will see. . . . *Good afternoon, Mrs. Remington.*"

His tones teemed with mockery, and yet they were hardly above the most ordinary conversational key. Rosalind no longer felt anger against him as he disappeared. It would have seemed to her like being angry at a falling stone, a train that has run off the track, or any other of those adverse agencies which we call instruments of fate. She moved away, with the letters already concealed on her person, and at her earliest opportunity she read them. She swiftly made up her mind that they were not forgeries. Her sense of insult, of outrage, became terrible, after this. She had despised her husband for the perfectly sordid way in which he married her; but she had never deemed him capable of taxing her contempt afresh for this one most pitiful cause of all!

She went back from the garden-party to Mrs. Casilear's before that lady herself returned. It was only a step from one spacious "cottage" to the other, and Rosalind had two rather agreeable society-men to walk with her. At the door of her sister's home, however, she dismissed them both, say-

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ing that she was tired and wanted to get a little rest before the ball at the Casino that evening.

In the hall, just as she was about ascending to her own apartments, she came face to face with her husband. He looked no less handsome than foppish; he had a bunch of white flowers in the button-hole of his dark broadcloth coat, and he was fastening on a pair of lavender gloves stitched with black.

"Returned so soon?" he said to his wife.

"Yes," she answered. "*You* are going late."

"Oh, I dare say I shall have all I want of it."

She inwardly loathed him as she watched him. He stood before her like the incarnate and personified folly of her recent girlhood, tauntingly and insolently amiable.

While her foot was on the lowest step of the staircase she paused and looked at him with a careless glance over one shoulder.

"By the way, our visit here is getting to be rather a long one."

"Yes; so it is, isn't it?" He had finished fastening his glove now, and he lifted his head with an air of courteous attentiveness. "But I supposed you didn't just look at it in that way."

"I don't," said Rosalind. "Still, this is Caroline's house, after all. They say it is so charming here in September. I saw an empty house yesterday that I liked,—the Swartwouts'; they're abroad. It's in Kay Street; but then this Ocean Avenue gets really cold by the autumn."

He was silent for a few seconds; he was staring through the wide-open door-way of the hall at the blue sweep of ocean that shimmered so broadly out beyond the lawny precipices.

"I don't know," he said, "that I should care much for Newport at all after the cold weather sets in."

But Rosalind took the house in Kay Street a few days later, nevertheless. Carroll was complaisance itself, though he laughingly said to his wife, in the presence of Mrs. Casilear and Uncle Seth,—

"If I make some rather extended visits in New York during September, I hope you'll not be angry."

"I sha'n't be angry," Rosalind replied.

Before the end of August they were in their new house. Meanwhile, Rosalind had done what she shrank from doing, yet somehow exulted in having the power to perform. She had held frequent talks with a certain very clever lawyer, a resident of Newport, and authorized him to collect any legal evidence of a special sort against her husband which accomplished and well-paid detective capacity could secure. It was not long before she held in her hands proofs decidedly stronger than even the letters which Whiteright Abendroth had given her.

The season was waning, in a fashionable sense, but Mrs. Golightly Busteed still had managed to continue at Newport. More than once this lady had believed there was no help for it, and that she must seek a dolefully quiet little New England village, where her mother lay painfully ill, attended by

another daughter, not so engrossed in fashionable pastimes as was Mrs. Busteed. But just as all chance of remaining seemed lost, a fresh invitation would be wrung from some new acquaintance, and once more her insatiably social spirit would be bathed in ecstatic triumph. She was radiant, for this reason, when she drove, one morning, to Mrs. Casilear's cottage, in the landau of no less remarkable a person than Mrs. Hamilton Van Dam. Rosalind, as it chanced, was also at her sister's house that morning. Both ladies understood how keenly it delighted Mrs. Busteed to have Mrs. Hamilton Van Dam notice her in any way whatever; but they were both unprepared for this announcement, soon made by Mrs. Busteed's own lips: "I had just told myself that I must go and see poor, dear mamma at Rockingham, when I received two pieces of good news."

"What were they?" civilly inquired Mrs. Casilear.

"One," replied Mrs. Busteed, "was the announcement that poor dear mamma had become so much better, and one was the sweetly kind invitation of Mrs. Van Dam, here, that I should pass a week with her in her delightful home on Narragansett Avenue."

"Oh, don't call it delightful," smiled Mrs. Van Dam, who was a faded little woman with white eyelashes and a stoop. "It is really nothing beside this palace of Mrs. Casilear's."

"How sweetly kind of you to call my poor little cottage a palace," said Mrs. Casilear suavely.

The challenging falsity of Mrs. Busteed affected Rosalind peculiarly that morning. As a rule she could endure it in

silence, but to-day her mood grew aggressive and passed the customary limit of restriction. She well knew that little Mrs. Hamilton Van Dam was propriety itself; all the lady's acts had been stamped with strictest conventionalism for years. Rosalind could not but remember, just then, how liberal had been the sentiments of Mrs. Golightly Busted, when, on more than one occasion, the latter had chosen to air them under the rationalistic *ægis* of the Twentieth Century Club.

"Have you given yourself quite up to the gayer and lighter life, Mrs. Busted?" Rosalind now inquired. "Or do you still find time to pursue your literary and philosophic studies, even here at the seaside?"

Mrs. Van Dam slightly started. Words like "literary" and "philosophic" did not belong in her dictionary. She glanced first at Rosalind and then at her guest, Mrs. Busted, as though the latter had just been accused of something not altogether savory and commendable.

Mrs. Busted gave a nervous little cough. It is quite possible that she smelt mischief in the air. She knew how cordially Rosalind disliked her, and perhaps she had a guilty sense that the aversion was liberally merited.

"I never claimed to be either literary or philosophic," she said. "You must be thinking of somebody else."

"Oh, no, I'm not," gently insisted Rosalind. "I mean, when you were so fond of going to the Twentieth Century Club."

"The Twentieth Century Club!" exclaimed Mrs. Van

Dam, with a dainty yet pronounced shiver. "Oh, *how* I dislike that body of people! I've never been to one of their meetings, and I never intend to go. I have heard that they are sometimes perfectly *blasphemous*,—that they behave like perfect *atheists*. They have some other word for 'atheists,' that sounds better, but that means exactly the same thing."

"It's agnostic," said Rosalind dryly. "Mrs. Busteed can tell you all about it."

"*I!*" cried Mrs. Busteed, coloring violently, while Mrs. Van Dam turned and looked at her with shocked eyes. "Why, Mrs. Remington, what *can* you be thinking about?"

"I'm thinking of how very strong an agnostic you always were," Rosalind answered, without the least note of bitterness in her voice and a frankness there that had anything but a factitious ring. "I say 'were,'" she added, though it isn't very probable that you've grown orthodox all over again. People very rarely do that."

"I—I certainly haven't grown orthodox all over again, as—as you are pleased to put it," stammered Mrs. Busteed. She might have given Rosalind a sharply chiding answer; but she was that type of the American snob unwilling ever to lose a single profitable acquaintance. Merely to know Rosalind Remington—to be seen exchanging a bow with her—meant a privilege that she was resolved on retaining, even at the sacrifice of considerable solid self-respect. "I do not recall," she added, with precisely the hypocrisy which Rosalind had expected of her and had previously observed, "ever

being *really* unorthodox. I may have found myself interested in the queer flights and speculations that these—er—free-thinkers indulge in, but I cannot say that I ever *sympathized* with any of their—er—proceedings.”

“Freethinkers!” shivered Mrs. Hamilton Van Dam. “It seems to me, if I may use so strong a term, that they are the children of Satan.” And she looked at Mrs. Busteed rather frowningly, as though she more than half believed what Rosalind had said regarding that lady’s recreant faith. Mrs. Busteed, in turn, bridled, yet at the same time showed severe embarrassment.

A smile of irony touched Rosalind’s lips. Mrs. Casilear tried to catch her eye, and reprove her into silence by a look. Rosalind knew very well that her sister was doing so, but avoided having her eye caught.

“How very strange it sounds to hear you speak like that, Mrs. Busteed,” she said. “I recollect so distinctly your telling me that you thought Robert G. Ingersoll one of the noblest of created beings, and that you believed the days of churches and clergymen were numbered.”

“Oh, *did* you ever say anything so horrible, Mrs. Busteed?” exclaimed Mrs. Van Dam, turning eyes of arraignment upon the lady whom she had asked to spend a week with her at her cottage on Narragansett Avenue.

“I have no recollection of ever saying anything in the least like it!” cried Mrs. Busteed, ready to burst into tears, but by no means ready to tell the truth.

“Then possibly my sister has made a mistake,” broke in

Mrs. Casilear. She forced Rosalind to meet her gaze now. "Rosalind," she said, "you may be thinking of somebody else, and you ought to admit it, my dear, if there is the faintest possibility of such being the case."

"I am thinking of no one else," said Rosalind. There had been a gleam of weariness in that ironical smile of hers, but now all such evidence vanished, and a delicate, yet palpable zest and diversion replaced it. "I recollect *very* distinctly that Mrs. Busteed, about three years ago, was an agnostic and freethinker of the most marked character. It is not such a very long time for one to remember. I dare say there are several other ladies at Newport now who would be very willing to bear me out in my testimony. *You* may despise the Twentieth Century Club, Mrs. Van Dam, and cordially disapprove it, but a good many of your friends, as you have probably found, like the animated and brilliant discussions it arouses."

"Oh, I always enjoyed *those*," struck in Mrs. Busteed, only too anxious for some sort of patched-up armistice, out of which she could emerge decently safe. "But a great many other subjects are treated of besides religious ones. In fact, I often have wished that subjects like poetry and the drama, and even politics would be made the principal ones on which the speakers tried their skill at oratory."

Rosalind's curious little smile deepened. "I didn't allude at all to your æsthetic tastes when I last spoke," she said relentlessly; "I was thinking only of your anti-religious feelings."

"Anti-religious!" murmured Mrs. Van Dam, with another sidelong look at Mrs. Busteed.

"Rosalind!" now protested Mrs. Casilear, rising and going over toward where her sister sat; "you are cruel, you are rude! I cannot let you persecute poor Mrs. Busteed in this way."

Rosalind rose at this, and the smile quite faded from her face. "It is Mrs. Busteed," she said, "who persecutes herself."

"I have always wished well to Mrs. Remington," here cried Mrs. Busteed quite emotionally. "I am sure she has no reason to dislike me as she does."

Mrs. Casilear was about to speak, but Rosalind, with a slight, commanding gesture, waved her aside. She looked straight at Mrs. Busteed, and in a very firm and serious voice she said,—

"I do not think I have shown any dislike of you; but I have shown, and I plainly feel dislike of the way in which you endeavor to hide your true opinions from those who fail to share them. This is not the first time that I have known you to deny, from motives of policy, your real position as an agnostic. I hold myself justified in making Mrs. Van Dam understand that you *are* one, though you have just seen fit to deny it."

Rosalind walked quietly out of the room after that, and spent about half an hour down on the lovely echoing cliffs. Her thoughts very soon wandered from Mrs. Busteed and that lady's unblushing hypocrisies, to other far graver matters. When she re-entered the house, Mrs. Van Dam and her

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companion had departed, and Mrs. Casilear met her with a face full of mingled reproach and amusement.

"Oh, Rosalind," she said, "how could you torment that poor woman as you did?"

"I didn't find it at all difficult," replied Rosalind. "And now that it is done I remember that I have always meant to punish her deceit if I should ever get the chance."

"You've certainly punished it," said Mrs. Casilear. "Mrs. Van Dam treated her, during the rest of their visit, as though she were a person with some contagious disease. I haven't a doubt that you've been the means of curtailing her visit at the Van Dam cottage."

"It will teach her a lesson, if I have," said Rosalind.

"But, Rosalind! we are all hypocrites, more or less."

"Some of us are 'less,' thank heaven, Caroline."

She thought of her husband at this instant, and of the hypocrite she had discovered *him* to be. Somehow her mood would not let her tell Caroline the truth, that morning; she was too troubled by the interview that must take place at once between herself and Carroll. There was no use of putting off that interview any longer. She left the Casilear cottage to-day with the intention of holding it as soon as possible. The chain of proof was complete; it had but to be wound about Carroll Remington, and the latter would forthwith be dragged from the place that he now held as her husband. Divorces in Rhode Island are far easier to obtain than in New York. She meant to apply in the Rhode Island courts. Her lawyers had told her that it

would necessitate her living in the State at least two years if she did so. But she had no objection to this plan. Life in New York could offer no attractions to her after gossip had begun to busy itself with her name. It would be far better to remain *en retraite* here at Newport. She would re-open some of her old favorite books; she would try to dismiss forever the triviality of purpose that had swayed her since marriage. It might be that she could find fresh friends here in her new seaside home, who would prove congenial, stimulating, aidful. She felt mentally repentant; she realized amid how much frivolity her married life had been spent; she saw, with still greater clarity of perception than ever, how silly a mummery is caste in all countries and how especially silly a one it is in this. It was true beyond all doubt that her union with Carroll Remington had demoralized her: to mind and soul it had been like an enervating, stupefying drug. The larger issues of life had slipped from her heed, as the fabric on which they are working might slip from the hands of some weary needle-woman. Now she meant to concern herself once more with what was worth knowing and reflecting upon. Her charities could be taken up again; there was poverty and suffering everywhere; most surely she could find both even here in this beautiful little town.

As for her capacity to feel any new sentiment toward any other man while her life lasted, she had some time ago convinced herself that this must always remain dead, frozen, effortless. The ashes of the roses of her life were inured,

and a sad custodian, disappointment, guarded them. She was still young, but autumn reigned in her soul. Yet this autumn might bring much placid contentment,—why not? Once free from the ties that had grown bondage to her, she would try, actually, satisfyingly, to live again. The past would become like a feverish dream, and gradually its forlorn memories would fade from her mind. New habits, pursuits, aims, desires, would replace all that other unworthy spiritual usurpation. She had committed a terrible, a fatal mistake; but she was only one of millions who had done the same. Consolation, rehabilitation had reached others equally unfortunate. Why should her destiny be shorn of all benignant and solacing promise?

On returning to her cottage in Kay Street, that afternoon, she found that her husband was at home. He had gone to his own apartments, the servants informed her, and was most probably dressing.

“He means to drive to the Polo Grounds,” Rosalind said to herself. “There is to be a great assemblage this afternoon,—the last of the season. Now is my time. I will wait here below and meet him when he comes down-stairs. Better not delay. Delay is absurd, now.”

A little later she sent him a message by a servant,—a message that he would understand. She made it very clear, and in a way peremptory. Then she went into the pretty, brilliant drawing-room, and seated herself near one of its wide, airy windows, with a book. But she did not read; she simply waited.

In about twenty minutes or more she heard his step descending the stairs. She had learned to know that careless, loitering step of his so well! Very soon afterward he entered the drawing-room. As he saw her he smiled. She knew that smile so well, also!

"Did you want to see me?" he asked, in his smooth, gentlemanly voice.

"Yes," Rosalind answered.

He drew nearer to his wife after she had thus spoken. "Are you not going to the Polo Grounds to-day?" he asked.

"No," was Rosalind's reply. "This afternoon I shall remain at home."

"At home!" he repeated, as if in surprise. "I trust you are quite well."

"Oh, yes,—quite well." There was a little pause. "I sent for you to come and meet me here."

"Yes." He had gone to one of the windows and was looking out of it, with both hands in his pockets and that manner of the aristocratic idler showing itself in every line of his figure. But he turned as he pronounced this last brief answer, and they looked one another full in the face. He saw, then, that something had gone wrong—"devilish wrong," as he himself might have put it—and he quickly went to where his wife was seated and paused close at her side.

"My dear," he said, "what is the matter? Are you not well?"

"Oh, perfectly. I have something to tell you; that is all."

He half turned away again. "Ah!" And now he took out his watch, glancing at it. "How abominably late it gets before one realizes! You mean you've something important to tell me, Rosalind?"

"Very important."

He stroked his chin and stood watching her as he did so. She had drooped her head a little; she appeared to be in some kind of meditative mood. It had flashed through his mind that she was going to curtail his supply of money,—rebuke him for past extravagances,—retail for his diversion some of the economical sentences of her Uncle Seth Haviland, that horrid old chap with the yellow tuft on his chin, and the Yankee make-up, and the tiresome fashion of saying disagreeable things through his nose.

Amid the little silence that again ensued, Rosalind lifted her head and let the gaze of her gray eyes rest full upon her husband's face. "I hope you have no pressing engagement," she went on; "for what I have to say may occupy considerable time."

"I had a sort of half-appointment with a man over at the club," Carroll returned; "but that's of no real consequence just now. It can keep." He immediately threw himself into an arm-chair at only a slight distance from the seat which his wife occupied. "You wished, my dear to tell me——"

"I wished to tell you," broke in Rosalind, with low, vibrating voice, "that it will not be possible for us to live longer together as man and wife."

Carroll Remington started. Then he stared at her, with

back-thrown head, growing a good deal paler as he did so. And finally he said, in tones no louder than hers had been,—

“Are you out of your senses?”

“It’s my impression that I’m very sane,” she answered, with a weary, fleeting smile. She regarded him with great earnestness as she proceeded. “It will be so much better if we can only separate quietly,—I mean with no bitter words on either side. I have often heard you say that you disliked a scene. Do not let us make a scene, then. And don’t suppose that I mean to leave you suddenly stranded, in a pecuniary sense. On the contrary——”

“One moment, please.”

He was excessively pale as he spoke these interrupting words. He had now made up his mind that he was being victimized by no jest on the part of his wife; she had meant what she had said. At first, however (for a few, swift seconds), it had seemed to him impossible that she could do so. For this man, in the secure serenity of his almost prodigious devotion to self, had never perceived that his wife had totally ceased to love him. He had married her because she was pretty, lady-like, *bien mise*, and had three millions of dollars. Of course he was aware, during their engagement and at the time of their marriage, that she passionately loved him. He did not imagine that the passionate part of her love would last, but he had never felt an instant of doubt that the love itself would last and thrive. If he had taken the time from his various amusements and pleasures for any reflection at all upon Rosalind’s wifely sentiments, it was to

congratulate himself that she had controlled and moderated their earlier ardors, and had seen the good sense of at least feigned passivity and unconcern. That she should have lost the power longer to love him would never have entered into his consciousness if she had treated him with actual scorn on any given occasion. He did not believe it now, and merely saw in the astonishing announcement that she had just made him an evidence of long-hid pique and heart-burning. Perhaps the imps of gossip had been perching on her shoulders and muttering nasty things in her ears. 'People will not mind their own business in any country on the globe, America least of all,' his musings ran. 'I *have* been a trifle more larky in certain ways, since I got home, than almost at any other time during my married life. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if some scandal-monger has been shocking her with tales about me. But even if this be true, I've no reason to take what she now says at all seriously. Why should I? Bah! she's entirely too fond of me to create any such fuss as that she's threatening.'

## VIII.

ALoud he now followed up the few words we have already heard him speak. "I should like to ask you, Rosalind," he said, "your reasons for having made these extraordinary statements. What have you heard concerning me that should induce you to be guilty of them?"

"I have heard that you—you are an unfaithful husband. I think you will understand just what I mean in saying this, and I beg that you will not ask me to say more."

"Really?" he murmured, crossing his legs and sending a flash from one of his bright varnished boots as he did so. The accent he used was of freezing sarcasm, but his manner was full of all its habitual repose and courtesy. "You can't surely mean that I will permit you to dismiss me from your doors (for I suppose they are your doors and not mine), without learning the nature of my offence?"

"Oh, you shall learn it, then," she answered. For some little time she went on speaking to him in a cold, business-like style, almost as if she had been her own lawyer, commissioned by herself to reveal the full explanation of her meditated course. She handed him the carefully copied duplicates of certain letters; she referred to persons and events he had deemed absolutely unknown by her; she threw a light of revelation upon his immediate and remoter



past, and one which told unmistakably that her modes of scrutiny had been excessively searching.

Nearly any other man would have grown furious, whether culpable or innocent. Carroll preserved an apparently unruffled good temper, though his controlled agitation did not escape his wife.

He saw the patient, quiet, determined way in which Rosalind had gone to work. Did this indicate love for him? Did it not rather indicate the complete death of love? Had he not made the most fatal, the most ruinous miscalculation, in supposing that the love of this woman would survive his deeds of disillusionment?

"I see," he at length said, "you have been playing the spy upon me. Not a very honorable series of actions, truly!"

"It was my sole means of self-defence," she replied.

"Self-defence?"

"Certainly."

"What need have you to defend yourself?"

"Every need."

"And against whom?"

"Against yourself. When I found out *why* you had married me, I also decided that there was no earthly use of my quarrelling with the bondage matrimony had now become. I made up my mind that I would endure it as gracefully as I knew how. I was sorry for the step I had taken, because I had ceased to regard you with the slightest love, and yet, as it then seemed to me, I must go on living with you until one

of us should die. These discoveries, however, have proved a blessing to me. They are your disgrace—or should be—but, as I have said, to me they are a blessing,—a godsend. They enable me to become divorced from *you*,—to end forever the mockery that our marriage has long since grown. If I cared for you in the least, this moment would be one of great pain to me. But, as it is, I do not suffer; I simply exult in the thought of gaining my freedom once more.”

Quite a long silence now followed between them. She saw him lift his hand to his moustache, and could not but see, moreover, how the hand trembled.

“You want a divorce, then?”

“Yes,—I want that.”

“There is some one whom you wish to marry, no doubt.”

“I shall never marry again.”

“Of course you will not; no woman ever does; you need not have denied the intention. But apart from all that, have you considered the question of how such an affair will affect your own position?”

“Yes—I have considered. I do not think my position will be affected by it in any specially unpleasant manner. But if it were, that would prove no hindrance to my carrying out the purpose. It is one which I should carry out at a cost of the worst social odium. Still, as matters now stand, I shall be annoyed by a passing notoriety, and no more.”

She had been like marble all through the interview. He looked at her colorless face and dignified posture, and

thought how charmingly *distinguée* a wife she had made him, —how often while they were abroad he had heard the words, “*Madame est vraiment ravissante,*” or “*Madame votre femme, monsieur, est parfaitement grande dame.*” And he was to lose her now, and with her his own high place as well, since the world never would look upon him as the same Carroll Remington again after she had brought so condemning a suit against him and won it, as she must inevitably do. Oh, idiot that he had been! It was his nature to be far more angry with himself, at this moment, than with his frigid, accusing, judicial wife. In all his careless, lounging existence he had never been very angry with any one. He was inordinately selfish, with a shallowness and hollowness that made their disappointments felt, sooner or later, to all who became interested in him or fond of him. But ensheathing these faults with an outward semblance of excellence, abode at all times his unvarying amiability.

He now rose slowly from his chair, and as he did so addressed her in a voice whose huskiness would have awakened her pity if he had not somehow managed to kill all chance of that long ago.

“You spoke, if I mistake not, of having found out why I had married you. Am I to understand by this that you believe yourself to have discovered anything unworthy in my behavior toward you when I *did* become your husband?”

“Yes; you are so to understand.”

“May I ask in what this unworthy behavior consisted?”

“It consisted in your becoming my husband.”

He was a picture of gentlemanly grace as he now stood before her.

"Ah," he said; "I see. You think I ought not to have asked a great heiress like yourself to marry me when *I* had nothing."

Rosalind shook her head. His gentle tones did not touch her in the least. She read him clairvoyantly; he had no crannies of policy, no nooks of compromise to conceal from her.

"No," she said; "that is not what I thought. It seems to me that you cannot be ignorant of just how and why you dealt me a very hard and terrible blow."

He looked at her for several moments in silence. And then he said, with tones that it would not have been far from the truth to call those of wistful sweetness,—

"I hope you were never foolish enough, Rosalind, to imagine that I married you without being immensely fond of you."

He took a step or two nearer to her as he ended; but just then Rosalind rose, while a laugh, full of undisguised mockery, broke from her lips.

"Oh, spare yourself!" she cried. "All the kinds of mask-wearing your best wit could light on would not deceive me now."

He went still closer to her, then; he tried to take her hand, but she would not let him.

"You do care for me a little, Rosalind!" he broke out hurriedly, and in his voice she recognized, with a frightful

sense of destiny's derisions, old tender notes that had once made her heart passionately throb. "You *do* care still, just a little, do you not?"

"No," she answered, looking him straight in the eyes and betraying a melancholy of which she was unconscious yet which probably conveyed to him a more hopeless response than any other demeanor would have done. "I doubt if woman ever loved a man more devotedly, more self-surrenderingly than I loved you. It is needless to tell you of this; you must have seen it."

"And you must have seen how I——"

"Don't coin a useless falsehood. I was a fool, and thought you returned my intense love. But pray let us be sensible to each other. When every shadow of sentiment has flown, good sense may at least be found remaining. We might as well talk, each to each, as if we were two partners in business who had made a wrong estimate of one another's mutual assistance. I hope this cooler, wiser method will prove *à votre gré*. I assure you, anything else is impossible with me. I have no desire to reproach you. Of what earthly use would that be? I simply wish to come to an agreement with you,—a plain, black-and-white agreement."

His voice had grown still huskier as he said, "An agreement! You call it so! I should call it precisely the reverse." A flash lit his usually mild eyes as he went on. "You want my consent to let you fling me into disgrace and to make no opposition while you do so."

"If you think it disgrace, then it will be of a kind that you have brought upon yourself."

"That is untrue," he said, with some heat. "I have always been a gentleman in my dealings with you."

"Ah," exclaimed Rosalind, "it was indeed a most gentlemanly thing for you to engage yourself to me as you did!"

He lifted both hands and shrugged his shoulders. "I'm not one of those explosive, sensational love-makers. I never could be. You knew that—you must have seen it in me—before we were married."

Rosalind smiled, and the smile was cold as starlight on ice. "There was something *I did not see in you* before we were married," she said, shaking her head. "Your marrying me at all,—your being willing to do it," she went on, "was a brutality."

"And what is your present course?" he cried. "Employing detectives to skulk behind me when I didn't know it! Oh, Rosalind!" His voice broke, and the color rose into his wife's cheeks while he suddenly covered his face with both hands. He had burst into tears. A minute later he had dropped down upon the edge of the chair recently quitted by him, and now in a sidelong, insecure attitude, he had it out with himself quite tempestuously.

Rosalind stood and watched him. Her contempt for him deepened, but no pity sprang up. Still, those fast-flowing tears told her the weakness of his nature as nothing had ever told it before. She perceived for the first time the full,

abysmal depths of her own past self-deception. He whom she had mistaken for a gallant, manful, chivalrous being, with all a gentleman's external graces and all his most admirable inner qualities, had turned out the most lamentably effeminate of creatures, not having strength enough to bear in decent composure the first calamitous results of his own cruel selfishness!

Coldly smiling as she sat and watched him dry his streaming eyes with a cambric handkerchief, Rosalind said to herself, 'Good heavens! can he possibly suppose that he will touch my feelings by such an exhibition of feebleness?'

But no; she wronged him in suspecting thus. His outburst was no masquerade; it had not a premeditated meaning. It was merely what such a man as he would be certain always to do under such a stress of circumstance.

While he wept she rose, and pausing beside him, said,—

"I shall sue for a divorce. I hope you will leave this house during the next few days. I, myself, am going to New York for a fortnight, and when I return here I trust that you will have taken other quarters. The money which you have drawn yearly will be disbursed until we are no longer man and wife. I say this to you, taking for granted that you will not oppose my legal action. If you do not, the matter can of course be settled much more easily. I shall soon leave for New York. Meanwhile I shall instruct my lawyers here to communicate with you and to request your decision during my absence."

Rosalind passed from the room after speaking these words. She went to her own apartments and remained there for several hours. Shortly before this she had written a letter to her sister Caroline. Mrs. Casilear, in full ball-dress, arrived at about ten o'clock. She was greatly excited as she met her sister in one of the upper chambers.

The first real quarrel that had ever taken place between them now occurred. Mrs. Casilear protested fiercely against Rosalind's intended action. She had driven to the Kay Street cottage on her way to one of the great balls of the closing season. She saw nothing except social suicide in her sister's present behavior, and declared so with sturdy vehemence.

"Social suicide?" answered Rosalind. "Well, then, if you call it that, Caroline, I will commit it."

"Who is it whom you are in love with and wish to marry after you have got your divorce?" cried Mrs. Casilear, trembling amid her laces and satins and diamonds.

"Now you insult me, Caroline."

"Do I? Then you need insult, to save you from becoming ridiculous."

"It is because of insult that I wish to cease from remaining so," answered Rosalind calmly.

"You will regret this folly all the rest of your days!" And Mrs. Casilear, gathering a sumptuous wrap from a chair on which she had cast it, swept toward the door.

"Then leave me to my purgatory, and don't make it worse by your undeserved sneers," returned Rosalind.



"Very well! Good-by,—good-by forever,—you reckless, obstinate creature!"

But Rosalind had long ago hit the precise truth when she had called her sister that anomalous person, a snob with a kind heart. Fashion had hardened her, but not to those she loved. Mrs. Casilear's carriage was in front of the Kay Street cottage again before eleven o'clock on the following morning. The elder sister had had a most conscience-smitten time at her ball on the previous evening; she had even so far transgressed her conservative principles as to behave *de haut en bas* to an eminent English grandee who had made inquiries of her regarding this, that and the other prominent feature of American life and manners. On meeting Rosalind again, she flung both arms about the latter's neck and besought forgiveness.

"I *know* I acted like a tyrant, dear," she exclaimed. "I lost my temper; I ought to be ashamed. Of course you have suffered horribly. I never had it to undergo with Norvin. He was always so correct *that way*. And then there are other reasons. Oh, Rosalind, you *know* you can always count on me to stand by you through thick and thin,—*always*! I had a talk with Uncle Seth this morning, and——"

"Uncle Seth?" broke in Rosalind. "I want to see him so much! Did he come with you?"

Uncle Seth was even then standing on the lawn outside, smoothing very ruminatively indeed the yellow tuft at his chin. Rosalind soon saw him, and a very long and serious

conference ensued. Uncle Seth spoke with a good deal of his accustomed pensive satire, but his advice in the main corresponded with Rosalind's premeditated course.

That same day, Carroll Remington left the cottage and took up his abode with a cousin of his who dwelt in great state not far away. Indignation had followed his tears. He swiftly found both sympathizers and abettors. Long before his old secluded mother had learned a word of the truth, he had received from fashionable relatives, more remote but decidedly more influential, assurances of their support and adherence.

A weak spirit encouraged by the counsels of heated partisans will sometimes attain a kind of hectic energy that resembles real organic power. It was thus with Carroll Remington. He had very soon made up his mind to contest his wife's action in the Rhode Island courts, though her case against him was one of the most inexorable potency.

His kindred were people of distinction, wealth and number. He flung away the allowance Rosalind had proffered him, and lived in splendid martyrdom upon their assistance. His lawyers had met those of Rosalind on her return from the trip to New York. The autumn arrived for her with its mellow, golden, seaside days full of a most bleak menace of conflict.

Uncle Seth, much to her satisfaction, remained with her at Newport. "There's a gathering of the clans," he said to his niece one day, when she had told him of some fresh hostile rumor. "It's funny how these people that pride

themselves on their pedigrees all flock together the minute one of 'em stands a chance of getting his or her character smirched. Nature don't do it that way; one disreputable cucumber won't 'queer' the whole patch, and if a cow smashes fences, her companions kind of look mad at her, instead of sympathetic. But who ever expects to find any real nature in human nature? That would be asking altogether too much."

"I rather admire that clannish impulse in families," Rosalind said.

"So would I," replied the old man, "if it meant anything worth being clannish about. But in such cases as this it means nothing except arr'gance and pride. All these people that have gathered round Remington know he's a faithless husband to you. I'd rather, for my part, be first cousin to a rogue who'd got justly punished for his roguery than to one who had it so thinly whitewashed that everybody saw it plain as day between the streaks."

It was not long before Carroll Remington regretted his own inpolicy in refusing the allowance which had been conceded to him by his wife. It is one thing to be a temporary pensioner upon your rich kindred; it is another to wear out your first compassionate welcome. Besides, Remington's health suddenly showed symptoms of decay. He became thinner, and an ugly hacking cough assailed him. This change made him the object of considerable effusive pity, and it was not unusual to hear, among his friends, "the dreadful cruelty" of Rosalind denounced, or the declaration

openly made that she was "breaking her poor husband's heart." As a real fact, Remington's physical troubles most probably had no relation whatever to his matrimonial ones. He had lived for years just that careless, unhygienic life of the man about town, which so frequently challenges collapse as to make us wonder why such disastrous result does not less seldom occur. The physician whom he consulted pronounced his case a serious one, yet thought it by no means unlikely that he might thoroughly recover and live for years afterward.

Meanwhile he had gone back to dwell with his mother, in the little Second Avenue house. He missed a hundred luxuries to which he had grown, since his marriage, daily and even hourly accustomed. He was already somewhat deeply in debt, and without a hope of paying what he owed. He had never done the slightest pecuniary service for his mother in times of connubial prosperity, though thousands that he had annually spent in idle extravagances might have gone to render the last days of Mrs. Remington more expressive of that immense gentility which she held herself to represent. If, indeed, he had adopted any such ordinarily generous plan in the past, it would have proved now to have been the casting of bread upon the waters; that little Second Avenue house would not have irked him half as forlornly as it did now, with its narrow and frugal economics.

At last he decided that there was no use longer to fight against overwhelming odds. He went to see a certain uncle of his, a Mr. Philip Van Wagenen, who dwelt in great

ease and elegance farther up town. He had a long conversation with this highly patrician kinsman, who at length agreed to become an emissary between himself and his wife. A day or two later Mr. Van Wagenen started for Newport. Soon after arriving there he paid a visit to Rosalind.

She received him with quiet politeness. She knew that he had professed himself, of late, to be one of her hottest foes, and the acerbity of some of his reported statements recurred to her while she looked into his demure and decorous face. It was a face as tawny as the shell of a peanut, and with about as much real expression. Mr. Van Wagenen was a lawyer, and prided himself upon the exquisite subtlety of his diplomacies. He had come on what he soon informed Rosalind was a decidedly delicate mission. She listened gravely, and after hearing a great deal of circumlocution, without understanding a word of its real significance, the true object of Mr. Van Wagenen's monologue suddenly flashed upon her.

"I see," she said, with an unsparing abruptness. "My husband wishes me to buy his silence in court, and he has asked you to come here and strike the bargain for him."

Philip Van Wagenen stared at her aghast. "Mrs. Remington!" he faltered, "are—are you aware of the insult that your words convey?"

"Assure me that I am at fault," replied Rosalind, "and I will beg your pardon. You yourself called your mission a delicate one. You afterward spoke of Carroll's illness and poverty. You referred, still later, to his own expressed wish

in the matter of going abroad and remaining there *over two years*. Can I mistake the drift of such words as these? You have said some very cruel things of me, Mr. Van Wagenen, and of my reasons for having married your nephew. You must let me tell you, then, that your present mission seems to me rather an *indelicate* one than otherwise."

"Madam!" hoarsely cried Mr. Van Wagenen, rising, "I have never before been so scandalously treated by any woman calling herself a lady."

Rosalind laughed amusedly. "Ah, my dear Mr. Van Wagenen," she said, "that is because you have probably never before so imperilled your own great respectability."

"I—I came here," he frowned, "in the hope of—of opening your heart toward your unhappy husband."

Again Rosalind laughed. "Excuse me," she said, with a satire that cut deep, as she intended it should; "I thought you principally desired to open my purse toward him."

Afterward, when she narrated the whole interview to Uncle Seth, the old man gave a succession of low, relishing laughs. "You served him precisely right," he said. "You've had a very rare experience, too; you've tasted the delights of a genuine vengeance. That's wine of a pretty rare vintage, *I* can tell you."

"But I don't like it, Uncle Seth; it's brewed, after all, from a bitter grape that was never friends with the sunshine." She went and stood by him while she thus spoke,

and put an arm about his neck, and began softly to stroke the sparse and thinning gray of his hair, which each new year now told upon. In spite of his most unpitiful cynicisms, she dearly loved him, knowing, as she did, what golden good filled his heart, however repellently might sometimes ring his phrases.

"I don't want to be hard with Carroll Remington, after all," she went on. "I sometimes feel as if he were almost born an irresponsible being. Besides, why should I not make the compromise, Uncle Seth? It will render affairs easier for myself if I pay him what he asks during the rest of his lifetime. It will save me from a public mortification that I now anticipate with loathing. For if he makes no opposition to my plea in court, when the case finally comes up, then——"

"I see," broke in Uncle Seth, nodding. "Buy him off if he's for sale. The luckier you, and the meaner knave he."

Rosalind slightly shuddered. Somehow those few words sounded to her as cynical as any she had ever heard Uncle Seth speak.

## IX.

THROUGH her lawyers, a few days later, Rosalind arranged the bestowal of a yearly allowance upon her husband indefinitely till his death. In exchange she received a paper signed with Carroll Remington's name, which sent a shiver through her to read,—a shiver of disgust. For a bribe, and a somewhat handsome one, he had sold her his silence.

"I only hope the affair will never really transpire," she said to Uncle Seth, one day.

"It can't hurt you if it does," the old man responded.

"Yes it can, Uncle Seth. It can mortify me. I should hate to have people know that I lived with any man as my husband who could stoop so low as that."

Uncle Seth smiled grimly. "That's a new view of the case, upon my word. I've sometimes asked myself whether there's ever been any human motive that hasn't had a grain or two of good strong selfishness to spice it with."

"There's no selfishness in *my* motive," protested Rosalind quite vehemently. "There's nothing but honest, wholesome pride."

Uncle Seth nodded in his short, wise way. "Yes, I know. What a lot of synonymous terms and phrases the word's got! If you strung them all one after another you could lay a new Atlantic cable with 'em."



"Pshaw, Uncle Seth, you distrust your fellow-creatures too much for one as good as you are yourself. I've often told you so before, and I can't help saying it again."

But the old man scarcely seemed to hear her. He was looking out of a broad window in the up-stairs room where he now sat, and that peculiar luminous horizon which we notice in certain of our clearer September days gleamed to him between the wind-shaken boughs of two or three autumn-tinted elms. Strangely enough, cynic as he was, nature forever found it easy to captivate him like this, through one of her myriad moods. To himself it seemed as though she were continually calling him back to share with her the unbroken solitude which he had once broodingly but exultantly preferred; and yet a new bondage held him away from that other hermetic life. The two fatherless girls for whom he had emerged from his retirement to fight so gallant a battle, were grown-up women, now, and the office of monetary custody which he discharged toward them could easily have been assumed by another. Still, he could not go back to California and put them, their virtues and their faults, their joys and their troubles, out of his thought forever. He had been amazed at his own silent delight when Rosalind had returned this last time from Europe. They were still "the girls" to him, and the fondness he bore for them stood in the place of wife, sons and daughters of his own. He did not realize it, but he loved them so well for the very reason that, unaided and by a magnificent conjunction of perseverance, astuteness and pluck, he had snatched their

fortune of six millions from the ruin with which thieves and swindlers threatened it. It is by helping our fellow-creatures, very often, that we form the habit of loving them; and good habits are usually quite as hard to overcome as bad ones.

An abrupt impediment now presented itself to the possible future success of Rosalind in obtaining her divorce. The Rhode Island courts had begun to frown upon too lax an administration of their laws. Repeated instances had occurred in which women had gone to Newport solely for the purpose of getting divorced in Rhode Island as quietly as they could after dwelling there two years, and then, with a serene disdain of all further residence in the little State, had taken themselves away again to more congenial surroundings. Rosalind was now given to understand that this rather high-stepping process of securing special legislation would henceforth be treated with summary measures. It might happen that her divorce would be refused her absolutely; but in any case annoyance, humiliation and delay untold now loomed before her with harsh imminence.

"And *he*," she said indignantly to Uncle Seth, one day, "has already sailed for Europe, where he will pass, most probably, years of contented leisure. Oh, it's hard that I should be made to suffer not merely for his sins but for the miserable follies of other men and women! How many of the marriages that have been brought here to Rhode Island for the purpose of annulling them, were made in the sincerity, the faith, the honesty that belonged to mine? How many of them were made only for the most worldly con-

siderations, the most coldly practical results! Hatred followed them, and rash, unreasonable errors on either side." She gave a little dreary, self-rebeking laugh, here, and with tight-shut lips began slowly to shake her head. "But now I talk like a real Pharisee," she soon broke forth again. "I ought to be ashamed of myself; ought I not, Uncle Seth?"

Uncle Seth answered her at first with one of his brief, decided nods. "As a rule," he presently declared, "the average human being ought to be ashamed of himself once out of every twenty-four hours through his lifetime,—except when he's sound asleep."

"I have no right to judge those other people in that sweeping way," Rosalind pursued. "What can I possibly know of their failings or their excellences?" Here a heavy sigh left her lips. "They might find just as many hard things to say of me. Heaven knows I've had every cause to believe that they do!"

One day, while she was passing along Catharine Street, hearing the rush of deep-voiced gales in the tree-tops and seeing the occasional scarlet or yellow flicker of a stray whirled leaf, she suddenly found herself face to face, just at the turning of a corner, with a gentleman whose presence was unexpected enough to bring a little cry of dismay from her lips. And then, remembering an old wilful and partisan quarrel which had pricked her conscience time and again in these latter months, she felt the blood stain her cheeks and looked dubiously, flurriedly into the gentleman's face.

He had quite passed her when he paused. It had

already flashed through Rosalind's mind how much manly beauty his fresh, brown-bearded face and tall, solid-knit figure expressed. Seeing that something in her funny little cry had caused him to really notice it (though she would not have held him in the least culpable if he had not done so), she immediately veered round and went up to where he stood.

"Mr. Trelawney," she said; and she put out her hand timidly.

He at once gave her his own hand; he was smiling, and the smile summoned to her pleasant household memories of days when she had been an ever-welcome guest at his home. But closer nearness to him quickly told her that his usual serenity of mind was gone. His lucid eyes had a cloud of worryment in them. Rosalind had hardly touched his hand before she added, in a voice quite different from that which she had used when pronouncing his name,—

"Tell me—has anything gone wrong with you or yours?"

"My wife is very ill," answered Trelawney.

Rosalind felt her color deepen. It seemed to her, now (as it had seemed for a long time past), that she had treated the Trelawneys with an insupportable arrogance.

"Your wife?" she now faltered. "Your wife? She is here—in Newport?"

"Yes." His manner had all its old ease and dignity, though not a hint of its former gladsome cheer. Still, he meant to be as genial as he had ever been,—she could not help divining that. Shame beset her as she did divine it,

for magnanimity appeared to breathe from his very presence. He was good enough, high-strung enough, to overlook the imperious burst of prejudice, autocracy and spleen that she had permitted herself in those former days. Doubtless he had heard of all her troubles, which the newspapers had so pitilessly bruited abroad, and had used his large, liberal brain to judge her with an equal acumen and charity. How like him to feel merely a gentle compassion for her past *ensorcelé* state, and to understand, to realize, just what an iron lesson sorrow and experience had swiftly but cogently taught her!

Hesitating for a second or two while his eyes swept her face, he now proceeded: "Naomi was taken ill about five months ago."

"I was abroad then," Rosalind broke in, with an irresistible accent of apology, even of self-extenuation, that dealt her an increased sense of smallness in her own self-estimate while the very words were leaving her lips.

"Yes, I know," he went on, and the three little monosyllables had a world of tender mercy for her in their tones. (It was so subtly generous of him, ran her fleet reflection, to call his wife "Naomi" in this familiar way!) "She was attacked by typhoid, and has never really recovered. We have been here but three weeks. I had hopes that the air of this charming place would restore her."

"And I never knew you were here!" she exclaimed ruefully.

He smiled. "We are living very obscurely. We have a

little cottage,—a *real* cottage, not one of these fine residences that are called so,—about five minutes' walk from here.” He named the locality, and while he spoke Rosalind impetuously made up her mind to ask a certain question.

She asked it a moment afterward, and she put one hand almost pleadingly on Trelawney's arm while it left her lips.

“Can't I go with you now and see—Naomi?” she said. “Or is it demanding too much,—after——?” She paused, withdrew her hand, and stood before him with shining eyes and burning cheeks.

“After?” he inquired.

She tossed her head, with an impatience for which her own self-accusation readily supplied the cause. “Oh, after my stupidity, my injustice in quarrelling with you both!” she exclaimed.

“Ah,” he said, his smile brightening, “so you are really yourself again? I somehow thought you were, the moment I looked at you. Of course Naomi will be glad to have you come to her. Come now, if you will.”

As they were presently moving along together in the direction of Trelawney's dwelling, they exchanged the same sort of talk that would have passed between friends who had re-met with mutual welcomes after inevitable separation; and indeed this was the true state of affairs between them, since it might be said of Rosalind that while such a spell of unreasoning passion possessed her spirit, she was the prey of an irresistible force.

“You are away from your college thus late in the

autumn?" she said to Trelawney. "Have not its exercises begun?"

"Yes," he replied. "But I felt my duty was here. The faculty have been very kind about it. I indicated a certain temporary substitute and they at once engaged him."

"How fortunate for you!" said Rosalind. "But——"

A faint laugh sounded from him as he detected her hesitation. "Oh, you mean about salary, and all that?" he said lightly. "No, the college does *not* continue it. But then I had a fair amount laid aside." His voice grew lower, yet somehow as if he were not aware of this. "My absence cannot possibly last so very long."

"You mean that your wife is so very ill?"

"Yes."

"She does not ever rise from her bed?"

"Rise from her bed?" he softly echoed. "She has not risen from it more than three times (and then only for brief intervals) through all these past five months."

"How dreadful! And now the end is near?"

"Very near."

"Still she is always conscious?"

"Indeed, yes. *Too* conscious, if I may so express it."

"Ah, you mean that she suffers!"

"No physical pain."

"Mentally, then?"

He was silent for some little time, looking straight before him. Then, while his eyes met Rosalind's again, he said,—

"She has a passionate desire to live."

Rosalind gave a slight shocked exclamation. "How dreadful! And it is impossible that she *can* live?"

"There is no conceivable hope. She has a slow, subtle failure of the heart. Every day her life ebbs a little lower. Sometimes even her nurse can detect no change for three or four days. But I always do. At the end of that period she has sunk by imperceptible degrees a little lower. There is always some difference; it is slight, but it is apparent,—at least to me; she is not what she was a short while ago. I mean physically, of course. Did you not understand that I meant *only* physically?"

"No," said Rosalind. "You mean, then, that her mind is clear and strong as ever?"

"Clearer, stronger than it ever was." His head fell forward upon his breast as he walked along, yet after a second or so he threw it backward again, with the air of one who has made some resolve against the least betrayal of despondency. "I wonder as I watch how her intellect glows. It is like a sacred lamp shining at the threshold of death, and seeming as if it might cast, any instant, a ray of discovery into the darkness beyond. Of course this is only a fancy of mine; rather a feverish one, you will perhaps feel inclined to tell me."

"No—I can realize its aptness with reference to *her*. The mind and body so terribly at odds with one another! What pathos! And the children? They are near her, surely."

"No."



"No? You astonish me."

"They are with a cousin of Naomi's, in New York. She preferred this arrangement; indeed, she insisted on it, and strongly."

"But what were her reasons?"

"A kind of dread that they should see her die. If I follow out her wish, I will not allow them to look upon her after she is dead. She regards dying with a sense of self-humiliation, just as certain people regard the affliction of madness upon their kindred. She said to me that she would like it greatly if I did not let the children even know that she had died, until they were both grown up. When I asked her motive for urging such a curious plea, she merely sighed, and murmured something about the awful forgetfulness of death. 'We speak of the absent,' she added, 'but scarcely ever of the dead.' I suppose that is true enough, but its being the truth makes it none the less painful."

"If her thoughts could only be taken away from death, for a little while," said Rosalind.

"They cannot. Here we are,—you may see her presently, and judge for yourself."

Rosalind waited down-stairs in the comfortable little sitting-room of the cottage, while Trelawney went to tell his wife that she had arrived. Some of the appointments of the room—a few etchings, a vase, a bust—brought the past vividly to her memory. She took up a book from the table, on which stood a green-shaded reading-lamp. It was a new

work by Lecky, and one of its middle leaves had been turned down, to mark the passage at which some reader—most probably Mr. Trelawney himself—had ceased from its perusal. Rosalind remembered with a stir of feeling how she had read Lecky's *History of European Rationalism* at the Trelawneys' suggestion, and how she had delighted in the book as being equally a revelation of half the falsehoods which have blinded and misled mankind for centuries, and a vindication of half those precious truths which we have heedlessly trampled under foot. She had not read this new book by the same author; she had not even heard of it. No one in her "set" read anything wise or worthy; perhaps it would be safer to state that nothing whatever was read there, not even the novel which fashionable men and women are popularly believed to devour; for nearly all books are the companions of repose, and whether we read from the loftiest or lowest impulse, we are apt to select such diversion in moods of tranquillity and not excitement.

'How I have been throwing away all my days!' Rosalind thought, as she turned the leaves of this unfamiliar volume and glanced at sentences which bore sweet, rich echoes of their author's unforgotten power and grace. 'What shall I say to this dying woman, whose friendship I cast idly from me to choose the dross and chaff of my present realizations? How shall I excuse myself for the desertion that only a selfish madness could have justified? Shall I confess to her that I *was* mad, as I now feel that certainly I must have been? But perhaps she will refuse to

see me at this drearily late hour. If she does, I shall hold the refusal as hardly half the punishment I merit.'

But Mrs. Trelawney had even then consented to see her remorseful friend. As Rosalind entered the bright, pretty room where the invalid lay, she instantly saw the piercing change for which Trelawney had prepared her.

## X.

THE new-comer dared not trust herself to speak, at first. There was a vacant chair close at the bedside; she sank into it. The sick woman did not speak, either. She gazed with great intentness, however, into her visitor's face. Those beautiful blue eyes of hers were luminous and expressive as other keenly recollected times had never shown them. But the anxiety and wistfulness of their gaze were not conquered, even by the welcome they beamed.

"I am so sorry, Naomi, to find that you are ill," Rosalind presently faltered. She had meanwhile taken between both her own hands a something that did not seem like a hand at all, but only the white, weightless little spectre of one. She stooped and kissed it, airy little atom of pallor that it was, a moment after thus speaking.

"Thanks, Rosalind," soon came the answer, lingeringly but very sincerely given. "I'm glad we have found you again."

"Ah," replied Rosalind, her voice breaking, "say you're glad I've found *myself* again!"

"Well, let it be that way if you please," and then there was a laugh, faint enough to be fancied the vague vocal ghost of its blithe predecessors. "Cyril has told me that

you didn't know we were here. You'd have come to us if you *had* known,—wouldn't you?"

Rosalind's tears mastered her, after that. They fell warm and heavy for a little while, on the small, chill hand she was yet clasping.

"Indeed I would have come, Naomi! You must be sure of it! Not—not that you ought to be sure, though, *ought* you, Naomi? I behaved so wilfully, so falsely to you, just before my marriage!"

"Not falsely, Rosalind. We did not think that. Cyril and I both felt,—but never mind. Shall I speak of your marriage? *You* have mentioned it. Still, you and I will talk of other things, if you so wish. Let it be just as you say."

"Oh, how like you, Naomi!" Rosalind answered. She kissed the colorless and sunken cheeks of her companion with ardor, again and again. Some of her tears fell there, too. Mrs. Trelawney smiled as she felt them flow.

"Rosalind," she murmured, "we always said, Cyril and I, that you were one of the loveliest natures ever made . . . Ask Cyril if that's not true . . . There's something about you that is golden. No alloy of association could ever hurt it. But every woman is liable to fall in love foolishly. I might have married a simpleton, a charlatan, a rogue. Yes, I might! Don't tell me I might *not*, for you would be wrong. We women are all at the mercy of the first wooer that fascinates us. Shakespeare, in his fairy play, hit the truth; the juice is squeezed in our eyes, and we wake and are the slaves of the enchanter who has brewed it from

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‘A little western flower,  
Before milk-white, now purple with love’s wand,  
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.’

You see how I remember my Shakespeare. Do you recall how Cyril and I always told you he was the greatest poet who has ever lived, and how you clung close to your Tennyson, and insisted he was greater because he had put this modern age into music? As if Shakespeare *could* not have written all those subtle things of ‘In Memoriam,’ if he had only been born late enough! . . . But that lovely poem ends with words that sound as if they promised an immortality after death. I cannot find any such promise for myself. I wish I could!”

‘Death,’ thought Rosalind; ‘this is what her husband prepared me for. “If her thoughts could only be taken away from death for a little while,” he said.’

“I find no evidence of *living again* after we are done with these bonds and shackles of the body, Rosalind,—none at all!”

‘She has forgotten all about my poor matrimonial mistake!’ sombrely reflected Rosalind.

Till now the radiant eyes had seemed to devour Rosalind with their scrutiny; but suddenly a glaze overspread them; their limpid blue became dulled; the marble lids dropped over them, with tenderest tracery of veins on either delicate filament.

In another instant Trelawney had stolen to Rosalind’s side. “These attacks,” he whispered, “overcome her constantly.

It's as if the weakness of her physical life were challenging the power of her mental one. Very soon she will wake again, and with a vigor of mind that will surprise you."

This prophecy proved true. Abruptly as they had closed, the veiled eyes reopened.

"Ah, Rosalind," came the soft, loitering words, "you're there—yes—take my hand between both your own again, just as you did before. It's thin and little, isn't it? It's almost lost in your two healthy ones. And yet you always had such nice, small, slender hands. Cyril and I used to say so,—didn't we, Cyril? You had begun to tell me about your troubles. Well, they came, didn't they? We read of them in the newspapers,—pardon me, but you know how they were noised abroad,—and Cyril mentioned them, and I made him read me all that had been so cruelly printed. Ah, Rosalind, why should you care, though? You don't love that man any more, do you? You *can't!* Do you?"

"No, Naomi," answered Rosalind.

"I thought not,—but why should you care? You are going to live! *live!* Oh, there is so much in that! You recollect, I always hated so to be ill; I used to tell people I was well, when I could hardly keep myself up at all. But now I hate *to die*, just as I hated then to be ill. *To die!* Oh, it means everything that I shrink from! I have no faith in what they call a *hereafter*,—none,—none! I have a faith, a certain kind of faith, but it is not Cyril's. You remember? He has always believed in some supreme conscious force behind all the phenomena of nature. I do not so believe.

We have had *such* arguments, Cyril and I. Spinoza's philosophy has always seemed to me the right one . . . Nature is an immense creator and an immense destroyer. She brings us forth, and she receives us back again into her bosom. There is nothing but Nature, producing and then annihilating, throughout all the big cycles of the centuries. But I don't want to be annihilated! I want to go on living, *living!* Oh, I know it is childish to talk like this, but it is not childish to want to live and see all the wondrous things the world will yet look on. Think of it! They will do such marvels with electricity,—and there is another power not yet more than dreamed of by science . . . etheric, some people call it,—gravitation, others. It is what keeps the whole system of stars in their places amid space; it is what makes millions of monstrous planets whirl about millions of monstrous suns. And they are going to find it all out, here on this little speck of an earth! I *know* they are. Look what Science has done already! Is there anything that she can *not* do in the future? And, oh, I *want to be there to see it all!* Yes, I do! I don't want to pass away and be senseless as the senseless dust I was first made from! Other generations, Rosalind, will even *conquer* death. Thousands and thousands of people will be born upon this little planet, *not to die at all!* It is sure to come! The whole push and impetus of knowledge is working toward that result. A perfect environment, a perpetual life . . . Herbert Spencer speaks of it . . . what does he say? I once learned it by heart; perhaps I can remember it now . . . 'Were there no changes in the environ-



ment but such as the organism has adapted changes to meet, and were it never to fail in the efficiency with which it met them, there would be eternal existence and universal knowledge.' Yes, those are the very words, are they not, Cyril? Eternal existence and universal knowledge! that is what I long for; that is what I believe is coming; that is what it *agonizes me to die not having found!*"

Her voice sank into a low gasp as she pronounced the last word, and once more the lids closed over her burning eyes. Trelawney stole again to Rosalind's side.

"She is more tired to-day than I thought she would be. These changes I spoke of are coming upon her with slighter intervals apart. If she should wake soon again (and not remain asleep for an hour or so, as I suspect she will), it is best that she should find no one here."

Rosalind passed from the room. She was by this time wretchedly agitated. Trelawney insisted upon her taking a glass of wine, and as the stimulant began to restore her, he himself answered with all his most genial candor what questions were now addressed to him.

"Yes," he said, "Naomi and I have never agreed regarding that one great vital question of all philosophy,—individual immortality. She has always maintained her own views. Spinoza impressed her most deeply in our past readings of his works. Naomi is really a pantheist, as she says."

"And you are a believer in personal immortality?"

"A believer? Yes,—but without a shadow of proof. My

feelings on this subject may go for nothing, since they are only feelings, and yet it often seems to me as if their very intensity should count for something."

"Indeed, yes!" exclaimed Rosalind. "Why should this desire for a future life be implanted in all humanity if it is to attain no fulfilment?"

"The desire does not presuppose its gratification," answered Trelawney, with a sad, transient smile. "If that were the case, we would have no disappointments whatever in this life. And yet how it teems with them!"

Rosalind at first answered with a low yet heavy sigh. "Still," she presently said, "this faith of yours is founded, is it not, on more than mere personal sensation?"

"Evolution tells me that behind its vast changes, from the simple to the complex and from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, lurks at least a symbolic conception of some supreme consciousness. These rhythmic waves of development are too mighty not to have emanated from some mightier Sea. In other words, I find God behind nature. Those last are not scientific words,—not the words of an exact thinker, I admit,—and it is a fixed tenet of mine that in exact thought lies the sole hope of society. Nevertheless, just here I make this concession, as one might say, to pure sentiment alone. Now, if that Divinity be *beyond* all the natural manifestations that we witness, I see no reason to imagine that He would have made our intelligences merely mortal. I think it almost logical to feel half certain that, as our senses both reveal to us and conceal from us our material

surroundings, in like manner they both suggest and hide our spiritual ones."

"If you could only give Naomi a little of your faith!" Rosalind said.

"I have often tried. Her mind rejects the idea of any personal deity who could for an instant tolerate the awful sufferings that exist on this earth, having power to alleviate them!"

Every day, for the next week, Rosalind called at the Trelawneys' cottage. She never failed to bring flowers, knowing her friend's passionate love for them, and often she brought some of the rarest procurable. She was not always permitted to see Mrs. Trelawney, however. There were two or three days on which a prolonged succession of fainting-fits had made death a matter of momentary threat.

"She is easier to-day," said Trelawney, on a certain morning, as he greeted Rosalind. "She insists that those exquisite orchids you brought her yesterday have had a reviving effect. You may see her if you desire. But I think it will be for the last time."

"The last time!" echoed Rosalind.

"Yes. I do not think she will be alive to-morrow at this hour."

Trelawney had prophesied over-hopefully. She received Rosalind with shining eyes, and thanked her profusely for the orchids.

"They live on air," she said; "they are like me. I am living that way now. But my dread of dying is not what it

was. I do not mean that I am willing to pass away; I am simply acquiescent. I never had *fear*, you know; I never was *afraid* to go. Cyril can tell you that. If I had had his trust in a future state, I might even have longed to die. For when one is so weak as I have been during months past, death seems like a promise of renewed strength, just because it holds out to us the prospect of some sort of thorough change. At least, I suppose it is thus with those who die in the Christian belief. Still, a great happiness has stolen over me. I cannot explain it, but my heart is full of it. I am so glad the children are not here, Rosalind! Cyril asked me this morning if I would like to see them, but I said 'no,' at once. I want them to remember me as I *used to be*, active, energetic, *living*! You see, the old revolt still continues. I can't quite overcome it. But that happiness I spoke of,—it is so strange, so subtle, so mysterious! It's as if I heard the great, low, sweet summons of Mother Nature, saying, 'Come to me, my child. Come and rest eternally on my bosom. All is well. Never mind about what the world will be when you have left it. Your fate is like the fate of innumerable others. They must all drop into sleep, sooner or later, just as you will presently do' . . . That is the way in which nature seems talking with me, Rosalind, and I don't really rebel any longer. I consent, I peacefully accept the inevitable."

Her eyes closed, and her breathing was now so regular and placid, that Rosalind whispered to Trelawney a few words of sad pleasure at what she could not help greeting as the most blessed alteration.

But a short time after this, the white lids lifted themselves again from the radiant eyes.

"Rosalind, you will see my children in the years to come . . . will you not? You will see them as often as you can . . . will you not?"

"Yes, Naomi. I will never forget them—never!"

"Thank you! And always speak to them of me in one way."

"One way, Naomi?"

"As never having been weak and forlorn and *dying* like this. Always speak to them of me, Rosalind, as one who was full of vitality and occupation till almost the very last. You understand, do you not?"

"Yes, my dear."

"Cyril," called his wife the next instant.

Like a flash he was at her side. "What is it, Naomi?" he murmured.

She was clutching his arm with both hands—his arm, whose solid strength made those two ghostly hands look frailer than they really were. Except for this grasp, there was no sign of struggle. Her lips were smiling as her gaze devoured his face. But the fires of her eyes had already begun to fade. After all these weeks of waiting, the end had come with terrible suddenness.

"Cyril," she just breathed and no more—"Cyril, don't grieve too much. Remember, you'll have your book,—and the children, too, Cyril—you'll have *them*! Teach them to think of me often—often."

Her head fell forward ; he opened his arms, and for a few seconds it was literally like the taking of some mere earthly yet eager farewell, between these two ; for he had gathered her to his breast with a great tenderness, bending down very low indeed. And when, a little later, he laid her back upon the pillow, she had ceased to live . . . . .

Nothing could have been simpler than Naomi Trelawney's burial,—funeral there was none. A few of her friends arrived from New York. The coffin, smothered in flowers, had been placed at one end of the modest little parlor, and for the space of an hour all who chose could come and look upon the dead woman's delicate, inanimate, restful face. Then four separate people, two of either sex, rose and pronounced earnest eulogies upon her who lay near by, and seemed listening with meek, low-lidded demureness. Rosalind had met one or two of these people in former days ; they had not, very probably, what her sister Caroline would have allowed to be the best stamp of gentility ; but they possessed thrice the mental cultivation of the cleverest trifle in fashionable sets, and the sort of refinement that is a good deal more spontaneous, becoming and trustworthy, from the fact of its not being a mere cloak of disguise cut by snobbery out of modishness. Their praises of Mrs. Trelawney were in no sense exaggerated ; there was nothing in what they said of her that suggested the traditional mendacity of the epitaph. Their commemorations, in fact, more than once took a narrative form ; certain good deeds and charitable offices of their dead friend were recorded grace-

fully and sweetly. There was no elaborate attempt to canonize the "dear departed;" her lovable character was dwelt upon with a kind of colloquial tenderness infinitely touching, and now and then some little corrective detail of date or *locale* would be supplied by one of the auditors. Finally the lid was placed upon the coffin, and it was borne away to a neighboring cemetery, where an open grave awaited it. She had liked Newport, and had told her husband that if she should die here it would please her to lie here after death.

The coffin was put into the earth without a syllable of religious rite. This had been not merely her desire, it had been her often repeated request. By the time that the burial took place, sunset had almost occurred. Banked masses of bluish clouds lay in the west. The air was chill as November could make it, and the dismantled trees above the wan, environing tombstones now and then would rattle drearily as the wind caught and shook them. Just as Rosalind turned away from the new-made grave, full of the most melancholy musings, a great shaft of sunlight struck through the keen air almost level with the tarnished and wilted grass. The grave-diggers had finished their work; the flowers had been laid upon the mound they had swiftly but deftly wrought. That huge golden beam, shot straight from the heart of the dying day, seemed like a luminous and lovely message of ceremonial and obsequy from the "mother nature" that this dead woman had so clung to as her ultimate and only friend.

Rosalind's heart was aching for Trelawney, but she merely pressed his hand at parting, and left the cemetery immediately afterward, to enter her carriage and be driven home.

That evening she wrote him a letter filled with the sweetest friendliness, and begging him to come and see her before he left for New York, as now she supposed that he would doubtless do within the next few days. "I caught in those last words that your wife spoke," she furthermore wrote, "a reference to 'your book.' I did not know that you were writing one. If you are, perhaps you will tell me something about it when we meet. I only hope that your sorrow will let you pursue its composition before long, and find there some of that spiritual distraction which it is so certain that you sadly need."

Trelawney paid her a visit about four days later. Everything had been prepared for his departure, which would take place on the morrow. He looked pale and grave, but relief rather than despair gleamed in his eyes as Rosalind more attentively scanned them. How, indeed, could it be otherwise? Those months of mortal struggle and pathetic weakness were over. To love the dead as a memory was better than to have gone on loving her as the tired victim and captive time had made her.

He almost said this to Rosalind, and she answered him that she could readily comprehend and sympathize with his feelings.

"You will resume your lectures at the college?" she asked.

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"Yes." And then with the perfect candor that he always used in speaking of his own affairs, he continued: "It will be necessary. Our savings were at a low ebb when poor Naomi went. And there are the children to be educated, you know."

Rosalind gave a little start. "I wish you would let me ——" she said, and then paused.

"Let you?" he queried innocently.

"Let me take the education of your—of *Naomi's* children entirely under my own charge. Will you?" She laid her hand on his arm for a second, and regarded him with glistening eyes and mounting color.

But he refused firmly, though very courteously. She saw that she had hurt his pride, and that he was striving not to let her perceive how it either ached or bled. And so, mildly desperate, she changed the subject of their talk, making a new reference to the "book" which she had already mentioned in her letter.

"I thought you knew that I was preparing it," he answered, approachably enough. "I had begun it some time after we first met you in New York."

"I did not know about it," Rosalind said. "Is it a very large and ambitious kind of work?"

"Very," he said, smiling.

"And you call it——?"

"I call it (at least for the present), *A Universal History of Skepticism*. That seems to me as expressive a title as I can hit upon just yet."

"It is broad, surely."

"Well, it is meant to be. I want to take the religious doubts of all ages and treat them with as much historical veracity as it is possible to obtain. India, Egypt, Assyria, Greece . . . I desire to deal with every unconventional movement against the recognized religion of each of these countries before I even touch upon modern iconoclasm."

"What a spacious undertaking!" exclaimed Rosalind. "Are there libraries here that can possibly satisfy your wants?"

"No." He shook his head in emphatic accompaniment of his spoken negative. "No, indeed, there are *not*," he went on. "Great gaps exist in my work as it now stands, which can be filled only in one way."

"You mean by a consultation of books not procurable on this side of the ocean."

"That is precisely my meaning."

They spoke of other things before he took his leave, but the recollection of this literary achievement on which he had already expended funds of devotion and energy unguessed by her before, dwelt with Rosalind for several succeeding days. She had always admired him, but never so warmly as after that one especial interview. The man's grief and his virile fortitude were both plainly apparent to her. But they counteracted each other, and so produced an effect of singular mental and moral hardihood that borrowed from her imagination the colors with which we are apt to invest an ideal.

'If I had married such a man!' she said to her inmost thoughts, again and again, 'how I could have helped him! Just to fancy such a destiny for myself makes my own marriage appear like a worse mockery than I have declared it in even my gloomiest moments!'

Fate had meanwhile been keeping in store for Rosalind a most piercing surprise. One morning, not many days later, she received a foreign letter that made her heart almost stand still while she read it.

Carroll Remington had suddenly died in Paris. His ailment, already pronounced fatal by an eminent French physician, had been aggravated by a severe cold, and had assumed the form of an acute seizure which had carried him off within the space of a few hours.

Rosalind was free. The legal operations that she had intended so resolutely to begin as soon as her two years' residence in Newport was completed, had become null, needless. At first she scarcely realized what she should do with this extraordinary visitation of liberty. All her plans were disarranged, *bouleversés*. She stood before Uncle Seth in dismay and tremor. "Is it not strange . . . strange?" she murmured.

"Nothing is strange," said Uncle Seth. "I don't see why he shouldn't have died now just as well as twenty years from now, after he'd spent about a hundred and fifty thousand dollars of your money, which he wasn't entitled to a cent of. Only they usually don't die that way. They go on living . . . all nuisances, as a rule, go on living,

to an indefinite extent of time. When they finally do die, they——”

“Oh, Uncle Seth, stop! He is dead, now. Remember that . . I’m so astonished! I’m so bewildered! And now I suppose they will say the most horrible things of me. They will accuse me of having driven him to his death by—by sheer cruelty. Me! when I aimed only at one result—to be rid, as quietly as I could, of a tie that he himself had turned into the bitterest bondage and humiliation!”

She was wholly right in her estimate of future public comment. Before she and Uncle Seth had left Newport for New York (an event which happened during the following week), there was printed in one of those journals which draw baneful thrift from scandal, personality and slander, an article as alive with acrimony as are a snake’s fangs with venom. It began by affirming Rosalind to be the most ichor-blooded of termagants, and ended by hints concerning her chastity as wife and woman, which carried with them falsehood no less revolting than elusive.

The scurrility of the article did not inflict any deep pain until she learned that its animus was representative of a rather wide popular prejudice. Mrs. Casilear trembled with indignation, and counselled that a law-suit should be commenced against the offensive journal.

“You have the power, Rosalind,” said her sister, “of silencing that shameful sheet forever. Everybody says that by spending a certain amount of money you can do it, and I sincerely hope you will.”

"But I shall not," said Rosalind. "There are some offenders whom we cannot afford to revenge ourselves upon; it confers too much unmerited dignity."

"M—yes," replied Mrs. Casilear, with a hostile accent and a lingering tone. "That sounds like a bit of wisdom you had already received from your professorial friend, Mr. Trelawney."

"Ah, Caroline, it isn't worthy of him, I assure you," said Rosalind. "He rarely delivers himself of such common-places. By the way, I hope you are not going to dislike Mr. Trelawney; for, to be quite frank with you, he is the only man I know whom I care to have occasionally visit me."

"Indeed?" returned Mrs. Casilear. "I see you've gone back to your old gods again."

"So I have—if you choose to put it that way. But I sha'n't interfere at all with *your* forms of worship, trivial as I think them. Don't do so with mine."

"You did not think mine so trivial a short time ago. They were yours too, then."

"I admit it. But you couldn't invent a reproach half as severe as those I've invented for myself."

Mrs. Casilear came several steps nearer to her sister. She was festally attired for a great dinner-party of more than fifty guests, to be given that evening in the ball-room at Delmonico's, where it had been rumored that a huge centre-piece of flowers would be opened during the banquet, and that a *tourbillon* of white doves, each bearing a jewel tied around its neck for one of the feminine revellers, would burst

upon the delighted vision of those assembled. The diamonds on her throat and breast radiated as she moved, and the costly silks of her raiment swept the floor with a kind of triumphant hiss. But in her black eyes had suddenly shone forth a great deal of real humanity and affection.

"Reproach you, Rosalind!" she exclaimed. "No, no; I don't want to do that! You know it, too. I'm ever so glad you came here to live with me and the children, instead of taking a house somewhere by yourself. And then it's such a comfort to have Uncle Seth again! I've missed his snappish remarks at breakfast-time (he's always a little more snappish at breakfast-time, you know, than at any other hour of the day) nearly as much as I've missed your dear face."

"I see," said Rosalind, her eyes moistening a little, though her voice and manner were matter-of-fact enough. "We never *could* quarrel very hard, Caroline; could we? I'd give you a kiss if I were not afraid of spoiling those roses at your corsage, or pricking myself with some of your jewel settings."

"You cynical thing!" cried Mrs. Casilear. "But I'll forgive you, and kiss you, too, as soon as I'm done up in my opera-cloak."

Rosalind raised one finger and gently shook it. "And you'll promise as well," she conditioned, "to say no more rude things about my best of friends, Mr. Trelawney?"

Mrs. Casilear shrugged her glittering shoulders and lifted her black eyebrows. "Dear me! I thought she only cared to have him drop in of an evening *pour se distraire*. Is it

possible that she takes his professorship more seriously than I'd dreamed of?"

"Caroline!" reproved her sister, flushing. "Recollect, his wife has hardly been dead three weeks, and that—well, that *I*——"

"Oh, I know, I know!" broke in Mrs. Casilear. And then she did kiss Rosalind, and embrace her also, braving the perils of the contact just prophesied. "You don't think I meant anything, Rosalind! No, indeed; how *could* I?"

But that "no indeed" and "how *could* I?" jarred a little more on Rosalind's irritated nerves than she would perhaps have been willing, just then, to make even the most secret self-admission.

It seemed to Mrs. Casilear as if the winter that now ensued must be dragging itself along at the most leaden rate of progress for Rosalind. The former lady went to balls, dinners, kettle-drums, and to twenty other different haunts of amusement, from the German grand opera, with Lehmann and Alvary, to amateur theatricals, with sumptuous costuming, lame incompetence and brazenly deceitful applause. Her sister, on the other hand, would sometimes take a *parterre* box at the opera, on nights when they played Wagner, and manage so to conceal herself within its interior that she remained invisible to everybody among the audience. On certain occasions, however, Cyril Trelawney had entered the box, and more than once she had invited his boy and girl to go with her. Like not a few of our modern children, they

had learned to love his music, and could hum melodies from "Tristan" and "Siegfried" which would have seemed to their parents, at a similar age, the wildest of discords. Rosalind had never presumed to repeat, in the hearing of their father, her proposition about educating Naomi Trelawney's children at her own expense. But if she could not possess the privilege of benefiting them in that one most noteworthy way, she reflected, there was no reason why she should be debarred from showing them kindness in a hundred other minor ways. Their father was bringing them up with great wisdom and tact, as she frankly informed Mrs. Casilear about twice every month. At such times her sister would utter little screams, as certain radicalisms of training were recorded to her. "What *will* those children become?" she would cry, in shocked tones. "An honor to their parents and their country," Rosalind would reply with heat. If Uncle Seth chanced to be present, he would silently chuckle. He liked Cyril Trelawney; they had had some talks together which the old man had never forgotten. Once he said to Rosalind, with a sparkle in his eye and a sort of new blithe note in his usually chill, sedate voice, "If old Diogenes and his lantern had come across *him*, there might have been a sudden end of that whole crank-like caper. A man would 'a been found at last, for he *is* one."

In the following spring, Rosalind went abroad again for a stay of about five months. Uncle Seth refused to go with her until within a day or two before the steamer sailed, and then he gave a growling consent which his niece found very inspirit-



ing, as she had longed for his protection and companionship. Meanwhile, however, she had induced Trelawney to let his Hilary accompany her. Never was a child more petted and treasured than now fell to the lot of this little girl. She was a charming young damsel, with a good deal of her mother's intelligence and with her father's frank, pellucid eyes. Rosalind would occasionally find herself staring into those eyes and thinking of a certain face, three thousand miles away, from which they had been inherited. When she came back from Europe in the autumn, she brought with her some gifts of books that made Trelawney almost cry out as he looked upon them. They were books that would prove of measureless value to him in the furtherance of his dominating literary project. He had by this time talked his work over so often with Rosalind that she had got to know much of the material for consultation which he found it futile to try and procure in America. Some of the books that she brought him (and she had by no means laid her generous hands on all that he desired) came near being worth their weight in gold. He trembled as he opened four or five of them. It occurred to her that she had never known him so cold and unentertaining as he proved himself during their first *tête-à-tête* after he had come into possession of his treasure.

'He has a burdening sense of indebtedness,' her subsequent musings ran. 'He can't pardon me for having put him under obligations to me. He is glad, and yet he is sorry. There will be times when *I* shall feel sorry for having taken all that trouble in ransacking the choicest book-treas-

uries of the continent, and spending hours with each of a dozen foreign old dry-as-dusts.'

Throughout the next winter Mrs. Casilear was gayer than ever. She gave another great ball in the same house where her last memorable social struggle had taken place. But if that had been a Waterloo, this turned out an Austerlitz. Her career of leadership differed from Napoleon's; its most salient defeat was at its beginning.

Rosalind did not even appear at the great ball. This winter her life was even quieter than it had been the winter before. In the mean time, Trelawney had become a regular visitor at the house; and Mrs. Casilear, despite her unconquerable preference for men who revered fashion enough to go and buy a new hat because the Prince of Wales had lately worn one with the nineteenth-of-an-inch difference in shape from that which they themselves had donned the preceding week, nevertheless dropped into the way of liking her sister's friend most heartily.

The winter had passed, and another spring had made the grass-plots in Madison Square push forth little golden hints of dandelions again, when one day she said to Rosalind,—

"He certainly *is* very nice. I didn't ever realize before that a scholar, a college-professor, a—a writer of abstruse books and essays, in fact, *could* be such a gentleman."

"Ah, Caroline," flashed her sister, "there are so many things you've never realized! But the greatest mystery of your ignorance is, my dear, the contentment that you're able to procure from it."

"Rosalind!" cried Mrs. Casilear, thoroughly insulted.

"No, no," Rosalind attempted to propitiate, "I didn't mean——"

"But you *did* mean!" struck in Mrs. Casilear, darting toward the door with her chin at an oblique angle. "You meant every word!" And then she dashed from the room, and the sisters did not speak for several hours—a momentous estrangement between their two affectionate but widely opposite souls.

Before her indignation had cooled, Mrs. Casilear sought Uncle Seth. They spoke together for about ten minutes, and then the old man's niece, after listening to a certain serene and decisive opinion of his, rather tempestuously replied,—

"Uncle Seth, it can't be! Excuse me,—I never had the disrespect to say so to you before; but—I don't believe you!"

"No?" said Uncle Seth unaffrontedly. "That's because you don't know anything at all about such men as he is. He's got a mind and a nature of his own that most of your male acquaintances could see through about as well as I could find out the politics of Mars."

"Oh, indeed, Uncle Seth! This is almost the first time I ever heard you *praise anybody*."

"I praise *him*," said the old man, stoutly and doggedly.

"But if affairs *are* as you say,—if he likes Rosalind and won't think of telling her so because she has a quantity of money and he nothing, it certainly is a very wretched sort of dead-lock for *her*."

"You've just hit it, Car'line. It *is* a dead-lock for her."

"And yet you *do* believe he—he loves her?"

"Don't you?"

"I'm not at all sure. They say he adored his wife."

"Man's a polygamous animal."

"That's a nice remark for *you* to make, Uncle Seth!"

"Well, I don't count. I'm not a man; I'm a monstrosity."

"I'd like to do all I could for Rosalind now," said Mrs. Casilear, with somehow a prim and yet tremulous inflection. "She's just been excessively rude to me, but still I—I mean to try and forgive her."

This little bit of truly Roman magnanimity appeared to quite escape Uncle Seth.

"I dare say you could do something if you really wanted," he declared, with a shrewd look straight into his niece's eyes.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Caroline Casilear. And she went very close to her uncle and stared fixedly down into his face.

Uncle Seth told her.

That evening was the one on which Trelawney usually came, and Mrs. Casilear knew it. Rosalind would have him shown into the pretty little reception-room just to the right of the front-door and opposite the huge gilded drawing-rooms, where her sister might be entertaining fifty guests, for all that she knew or cared to the contrary. She had *her* guest, and a multitude of other less important ones did not concern her, so long as they failed to trespass upon her own little cosey social corner.

The door-bell, at about quarter past eight o'clock, was

sounded with one of those short, yet mellow peals which modern luxury has substituted for the old-fashioned tinging of our New York grandparents' abodes. Mrs. Casilear was not dining out that evening, as it luckily happened; she had issued invitations for a state dinner of her own on the morrow, and she had determined to "save herself" in the way of digestion and repose. Rosalind was up-stairs in her apartments; she may or may not have heard the bell in this large mansion, where it was always ringing for a hundred different reasons. Nothing could be easier, therefore, than for Mrs. Casilear to have herself "discovered" in the hall, just as Trelawney crossed the main threshold of it.

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Trelawney!" she said, turning toward the new-comer with a most artfully surprised air of cordiality. She gave him her hand before he could take off his overcoat. "I was just going into the drawing-room to see about some lovely roses that had been sent me this afternoon. I want them to be kept fresh; the servants are so careless in that way, and you know how quickly these modern experiments in floriculture fade to nothing. It seems as if they were made more beautiful only at the expense of not being long-lived . . . But I won't take you into those big drawing-rooms; I know you're more accustomed to this little room on the right. I'll send for Rosalind; she is at home and doubtless expecting you."

But Mrs. Casilear did not send for Rosalind. At least, she did not do so until a good half-hour of conversation had elapsed between herself and Trelawney.

What she said during that comparatively short interview no one save Cyril Trelawney ever knew. If he told Rosalind, his divulgence will have to rank among the most flagrant treacheries of lovers, as it is certain that he gave a solemn promise never to let a syllable of Mrs. Casilear's confidence escape him.

He had tried in vain to like Mrs. Casilear until that hour. Rosalind had often said to him, "My sister is one of the sweetest women on earth, and if you could once *know her* for what she truly is, apart from all this 'society craze,' which, I regret to state, has now become a mild though confirmed lunacy with her, I am sure you would perceive how much warm, living humanity she possesses." But to-night he understood Rosalind's rosy criticism at its actual worth. He felt like blessing Mrs. Casilear for certain daring hints that she had given him.

After she had slipped away from the reception-room, Rosalind made her appearance there.

She seemed surprised and not a little fluttered. "My sister has just told me," she began, "that you have been here for some time. A message was sent me, Caroline says, but somehow I failed to receive it. I wonder which of the servants can have been so remiss."

"None of them," answered Trelawney, while he still held the hand that she had extended. "It was altogether my fault."

"Your fault?"

"Yes. Your sister *was going* to ring for a servant, after

we had met there in the hall together as I came in; but I think she forgot it."

"Forgot it?"

"Yes. She is no doubt under the impression that she *did* ring. But I—well, I—detained her."

Rosalind looked at him with bewilderment in her face. "You are somehow different from your usual self," she murmured. "If you were not always so self-possessed, I should say that you were really—excited."

Trelawney laughed. Not since the earlier days of their acquaintance had she heard so gay and careless a laugh leave his lips.

"Well, I *am* excited," he said. "It's your sister's fault."

"Caroline's?"

"Yes. She has convinced me that I have always underrated her. She has heaped coals of fire on my head."

Rosalind was looking at him with much seriousness. "There is something else to account for your exhilaration," she said.

He dropped his eyes for a moment, and stared at the floor. "Well—there is," he acceded.

"Your book?" exclaimed Rosalind, leaning toward him. "You have written some splendid new passage in it since I saw you last Thursday . . . I wonder if it can be finer than the one you read me then."

He lifted his eyes now. "I haven't touched my book since I saw you last," he said.

"No? Positively?" she queried.

"No. Positively. My book is finished—until I see the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris, and several other foreign libraries besides."

Rosalind's brows clouded a little, but she was unaware that they had done so.

A silence ensued. Trelawney was looking at her with great steadfastness in his gaze.

"But my book is not my only ambition," he presently resumed, in a voice that Rosalind thought both more suave and more melancholy than was his wont.

"You have a greater ambition, then? And you have not told me of it?"

"I have wanted to tell you of it," he said.

"And it does not concern your book?"

He drew a little nearer to her. She seemed vaguely to understand him; her color slightly kindled. "It concerns, if I may say so," he answered, "your interest in both my book and in me, Rosalind!" He sprang to his feet and faced her where she sat. "I am a poor college-professor; I have not a dime in the world except my salary; and you—you have——"

"Stop there!" she interrupted, rising at his last-spoken word, and as though it had had a thorn in it to sting her with. "I thought," she added, with frost in her voice, "that you meant to touch on something less despicable than my fortune! I am sick of being told that I have one. It may have its uses."

"Its uses!" he echoed. "You are giving away an ordinary



fortune every year in charities. You told me yourself what you gave last year to a hundred different claimants. It was——”

She tossed her head proudly. “It was—was nothing,—*nothing!*”

“It was two-thirds of your income.”

“It was *nothing*, I repeat!” she cried, almost distractedly. Her face in a trice grew crimson, and as though she added her next words in the teeth of some harsh, mental disrelish. “What I give I give. I can’t spend even that other third of my income. There’s no real generosity in what I’ve done,—not a gleam of it. Your book—I’d like to help *that*,—I’d like to be charitable in *that* way. I’ve told you so more than once. But it would not be charity,—did I say anything about charity! If I did I take it back,—I did not mean it. You are so sensitive—so absurdly sensitive—you’ve just told me that you can’t do another line on your book till you go abroad.” She bit her lip and lowered her head, and he saw that her knotted hands were in secret unrest. “Why won’t you let me *send* you abroad then, with the children? . . . Why *won’t* you? I——”

He was standing very near to her when he softly broke in,—

“Rosalind, if you care for my book enough to send me abroad that I may finish it, you must care for *me* also, since it’s to me that you’ve proffered this bounty.”

Her arms hung at her sides now. “I do care for you,” she said. “Have I ever denied it?”

"Denied it?" he repeated. "No. But you must see, as I see, that—that if I *went* abroad, *sent by you*, I should be——"

She darted like a shifting ray of light to the door of the little room. Standing on its threshold so that the heavy, glistening-woofed folds of the dark *portière* brushed against her elbows and the nape of her neck, she retorted with a depth of pride in her voice that shocked him as it met his ears, —

"You need not say another word. I—I did not mean to—to shame myself. It seems to me that—well, good-night. I——".

"Rosalind!" He was close at her side again. "Good heavens! if you really loved me as I love you—if it were not my book but only myself—I'd—I'd let the world call me a fortune-hunter and snap my fingers at it for calling me so!"

She was trembling, and he saw it; but she lifted the drapery just behind her with the sweep of one arm, and, half turning, looked at him across one shoulder.

"A fortune-hunter—*you!*" she said, with a despairing bitterness of accent. "You still think of *that*. I thought you knew me well enough to know that I would never notice again the man who dared to tell me that he loved me and that he remembered my fortune—as—as you now show me that you remember it—in one and the same breath. It has never brought me happiness, that fortune. It might have completed your book—your great book, for I admit that it is great; I have seen enough of it to know. But you have ended all . . . Good-night . . . good-by . . ."

He caught her in his arms and drew her back from the threshold she was about to cross. "Rosalind," he said, "I love you—I love you." And she felt his kisses upon her brow, and cheeks, and lips. . . .

That night, in the solitude of her own chamber, she said to herself, "Mine was a demoralizing marriage. It sunk me; it was a marriage (let me not disguise the truth to myself) of caprice, infatuation, sensuousness. This, if it ever takes place, will be a marriage of respect, clear-sightedness, idealism. Carroll Remington had all that was gross in me; let his grave keep it! Cyril Trelawney shall have all that is spiritual in me; let him duly treasure it!"

"And so your sister is really engaged to that dreadfully scholarly gentleman?" said Mrs. Golightly Busteded, a few days later, to Mrs. Casilear at an afternoon tea where both ladies met. "Your sister was always so intellectual! It must be a great gratification to you that she should marry a—a person—er—like *that*."

Mrs. Casilear smiled with much repose. "Yes," she answered, "I am enchanted at the match. Professor Trelawney is a confirmed agnostic, you know, but he isn't a bit ashamed of it, as some people are."

Mrs. Golightly Busteded laughed. The thrust did not hurt her. We all know what keen arrows are needed to pierce certain tough epidermises.

THE END.





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